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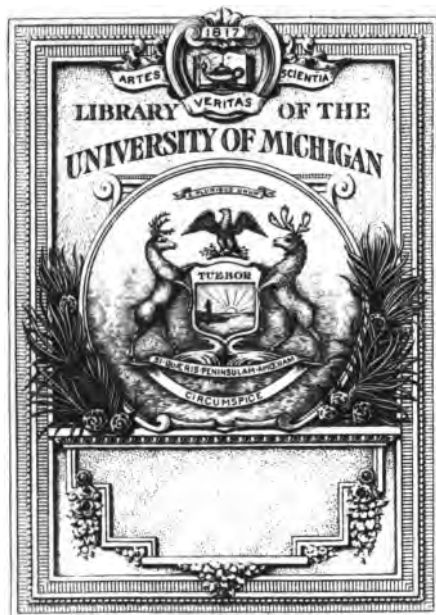
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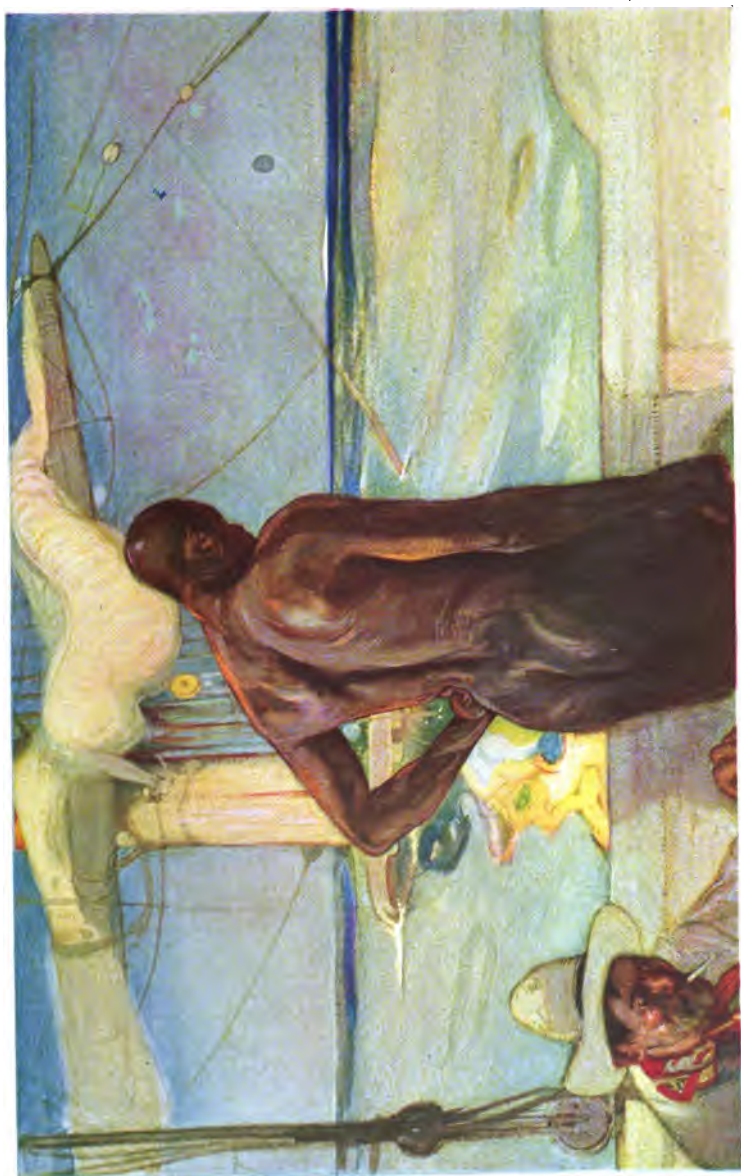
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*"The giant black stood gazing out to sea"*

(See page 17)



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# BAHAMA BILL

MATE OF THE WRECKING SLOOP *SEA-HORSE*

*By* <sup>*T. J. Hains*</sup> **T. JENKINS HAINS**

Author of

"THE VOYAGE OF THE ARROW."  
"THE BLACK BARQUE," "THE WINDJAMMERS," Etc.

*With a Frontispiece in full color  
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H. R. REUTERDAHL*



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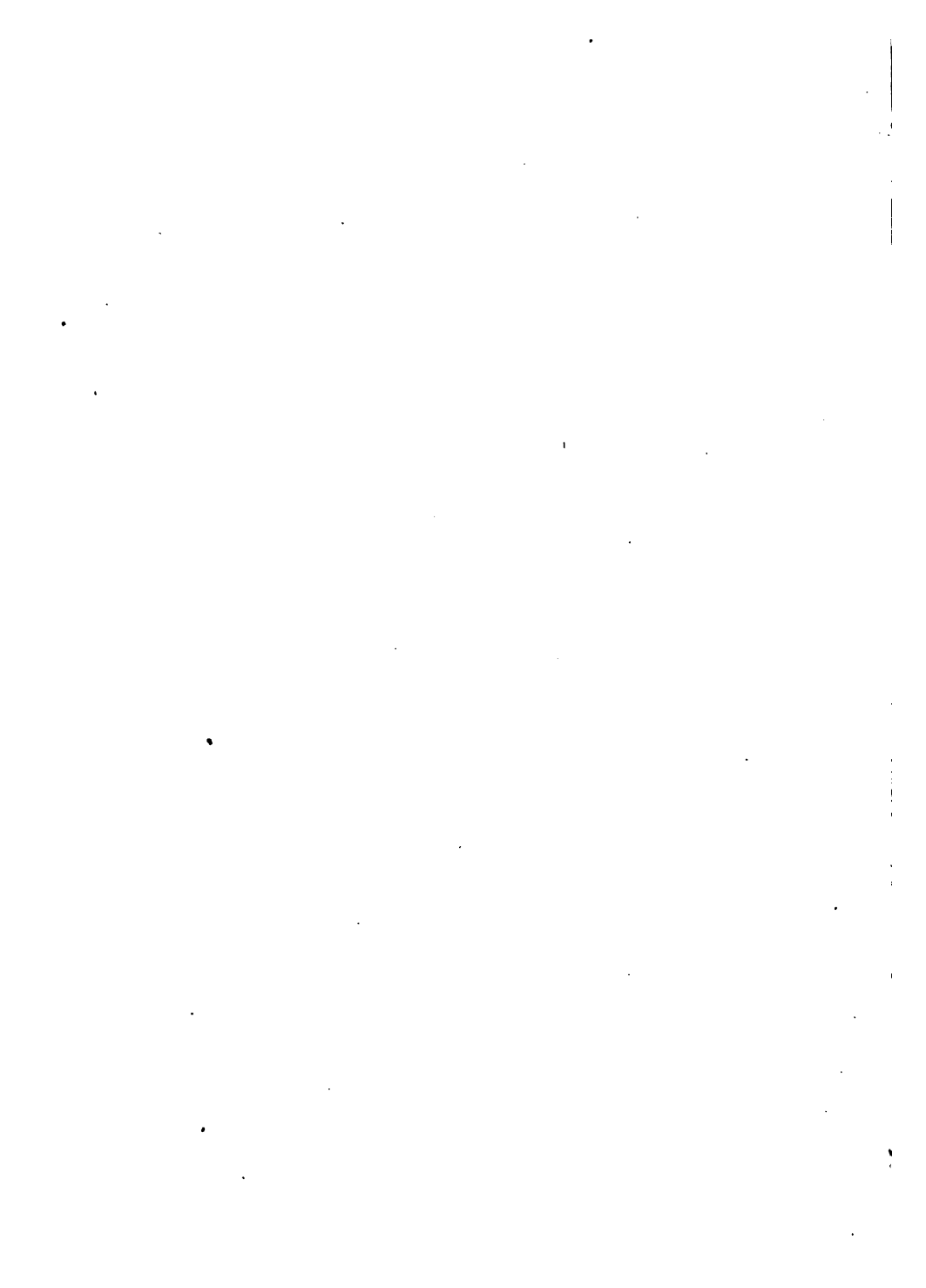
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# BAHAMA BILL

## I

### Beneath the "Bulldog's" Bilge

THE brig lay in four fathoms of water on the edge of the Great Bahama Bank. She had been a solid little vessel, built for the fruit trade, and she was about two hundred tons register. Her master had tried to sight the "Isaacs," but owing to the darkness and the drift of the Gulf Stream, he had miscalculated his distance in trying for the New Providence channel. A "nigger-head," a sharp, projecting point of coral, had poked a hole about four feet in diameter through her bottom, and she had gone down before they could run her into the shoal water on the bank.

Down to the graveyard of good ships, Key West, the message was hurried, and the wreckers of Florida Reef heard the news. A heavily built sloop of thirty tons, manned by ten Spongers and Conchs, started up the Florida channel and arrived upon the scene two days later.

The *Bulldog* had settled evenly upon her keel, but as she was sharp, she had listed until her masts were leaning well to starboard, dipping her yardarms deep

in the clear water. She was submerged as far up as her topsail yards.

The captain of the wrecker was a Conch. His mate was a giant negro of the Keys; young, powerful, and the best diver on the Florida Reef. His chest measured forty-eight inches in circumference over his lean pectoral muscles, and he often bent iron bars of one-half inch to show the set of his vise-like grip. He was almost black, with a sinister-looking leer upon his broad face, his eyes red and watery like most of the divers of the Bank. He could remain under four fathoms for at least three and a half minutes, and work with amazing force, and continue this terrific strain for six hours on a stretch, with but five minutes between dives. Half fish or alligator, and half human, he looked as he lounged naked in the hot sunshine upon the sloop's forecastle, his skin hard and callous as leather from long exposure to a tropic sun and salt water. He was ready for the work ahead, for it had been rumoured that the *Bulldog* had not less than fifty thousand dollars in silver aboard her. She was known to have been chartered by agents of the Venezuelan revolutionists, and to have arms and money aboard in abundance for their relief.

The day was well advanced when the spars of the brig showed above the sea. The sky was cloudless, and the little air there was stirring scarcely rippled the ocean; the swell rolling with that long, undulating sweep and peculiar slowness which characterizes calm weather in the Gulf Stream.

Far away the "Isaacs" showed above the horizon, and just the slightest glint of white told of the nearest cay miles away on the Great Bank. To the westward it was a trifle more than sixty miles to Florida Cape across the channel, with the deep ocean current sweeping to the northward between. The steady set of the Stream brought the wreckers rapidly nearer the brig in spite of the calm, and they let go their first anchor about fifty fathoms due south, and veered the cable to let the sloop drift slowly down upon the wreck. Then, lowering all canvas, they got out their kedges and moored the sloop just over the port rail of the *Bulldog* which could be distinctly seen about ten feet below the surface of the sea.

Three of the crew, all experienced divers, made ready while the mate went slowly to the rail and gazed fixedly down into the clear water. In calm weather the bottom on the Bank can be seen distinctly in five fathoms, and often at much greater depth. The weather was ideal now, and no one thought it necessary to use the "water-glass," the glass-bottomed bucket into which the diver usually sticks his head and gazes into the depths before making his plunge.

"I reckon ye might as well make a try," said the captain, coming to the mate's side. "Start here an' let the drift o' the current take ye th' whole length." And as he spoke he hove a life-line overboard for the men to grasp should the stream carry them too far. Coming to the surface they would be tired and not

want to swim back. A man stood by to haul in and save the diver the exertion.

The mate raised his eyes. He looked over the smooth sea and tilted his nose into the air, sniffing the gentle breeze.

"It might be a wery good day, Cap, but I sho' smells shurk. I ain't much perticular about this smooth weather. It nearly always brings 'em along 'bout dis time o' year. De season am mighty nigh done on de Bank. Yo' knows dey is mighty peart when dey gits plentiful."

"Are you feared?" asked the captain, looking at him scornfully.

"Well, I smell him plain, an' dat's a fact," said the mate, "but here goes."

The giant mate fell slowly outboard, then putting his hands before him he dropped straight down into the sea with hardly a splash. The captain bent over the rail and watched him as he swam quickly down, his great black form looking not unlike a turtle as it struck out vigorously with both hands and feet. Down, down it went until the shimmering light made it distorted and monstrous as the distance increased. Then it disappeared under the bend of the *Bulldog's* bilge.

A second diver came to the side and looked out over the smooth swell.

There was nothing in sight as far as the eye could reach save the glint of white on the distant cay to the

eastward. The Gulf Stream was undisturbed by even a ripple.

In a couple of minutes a loud snort astern told of the mate's reappearance. He seized the life-line and was quickly hauled alongside. He climbed leisurely to the deck.

All hands were now assembled and waited for his report.

"Tight as a drum. There ain't no way o' gettin' into her there," said the mate after two or three long breaths.

"Well, will you try the hatchway, then?" asked the captain.

"I ain't perticular about workin' down hatchways," said the giant, with a scowl.

"Nor me either," said the man who had come to make the second trip. "They said the stuff was aft under the cabin deck," said a tall man with aquiline features, known as Sam.

"Dynamite," whispered another, "what's the difference?"

"Plenty, if the underwriters come along and find her blown up. She ain't ours yet," said the captain sourly.

"An' who's to tell?" asked the mate with a fierce menace. "Who'll know what knocked a hole in her? They'll nebber float her. Bust her, says I."

The captain looked about him. There was nothing in sight, save the distant cay, ten miles or more to the eastward, which might harbour an inquisitive person.

And then the light-keeper himself was a wrecker. He thought a moment while the mate stood looking at him, and then went slowly down into the cabin and brought up a box of cartridges. Sam immediately brought out some exploders and several fathoms of fuse.

In a moment a large package was wrapped up and lashed with spun-yarn. It contained five half-pound cartridges and an exploder, with a fathom of fuse. A piece of iron was made fast to the whole to keep it upon the bottom, and then the mate called for a match. The fuse would burn for at least two minutes under water before the exploder was reached, and give time for the diver to get clear.

The captain scratched a light upon his trousers and held it to the fuse. A spluttering fizzing followed. Then over the side went the mate with the charge in his hand, and the men on the deck could see him swimming furiously down through the clear depths, the dynamite held before him and a thin spurt of bubbles trailing out from the end of the burning fuse.

He had little enough time to spare after he disappeared under the curve of the bilge. Coming to the surface he was quickly dragged aboard by the life-line, and then all hands waited a moment, which seemed an hour, for the shock.

A dull crash below followed by a peculiar ringing sound told of the discharge. The water lifted a moment over the spot some twenty feet astern, and then a storm of foam and bubbles surged to the surface.



The captain gazed apprehensively around the horizon again, and then smiled.

"I reckon that busted her," he said.

Over the side plunged the mate, followed by two more men, and as they went a great, dark shadow rose slowly to the surface in the disturbed water. It was the body of a giant shark.

The captain stood looking at it for a moment.

"The harpoon, quick," he yelled.

A man sprang for the iron, but the monster rolled slowly over upon his belly, and opened his jaws with spasmodic jerks. A great hole was torn in his side, and his dorsal fin was missing. He gave a few quick slaps with his tail, and then sank slowly down before the harpoon could be thrown.

"He's as dead as salt-fish," said a sailor, "clean busted wide open."

"He's a tiger," said the captain, "an' they never hunt alone. I c'ud see his stripes."

A diver called from the end of the life-line and was hauled up. One after another they came up, the mate last.

"What was the thing yo' dropped overboard?" he asked with a grin. "I seen him sinking an' thought he ware alive."

"It was a tiger," said the captain solemnly, looking askance at the big man.

"That settles it fer me," said one diver, "they always go in pairs."

"Me, too," went the chorus from the rest.

The mate said nothing. He had seen something below that made his eyes flash in spite of their salty rheum. The dynamite had done its work well, and with more daring than the others he had penetrated the hull far enough to catch a glimpse of the treasure. The explosion had scattered bright silver coins about the entrance of the hole, and he had seen what they had missed in the roiled water.

Here was a sore problem for the captain. He had the first chance at the wreck without observers, and here the carcass of a huge tiger-shark had upset everything. Within a few hours, the spars of other wreckers might show above the horizon, and then farewell to treasure-hunting. He could expect nothing but salvage at the most. If the owners decided to raise her he could do nothing more than sell his claim upon her, and probably lose most of that, for he was a poor man and dreaded the Admiralty courts. It would be much better if he could get what money there was in her, finding it in an abandoned hull. Having the whole of it in his possession was much better than trying to get back from the owners his share under the salvage law. Any delay for shark-hunting meant a heavy loss. He looked askance at the big mate, but said nothing, knowing full well that it lay with that black giant whether he would take the risk of going below again or not.

"I knew I smelt him plain enough," said the giant, sniffing the air again, "dem big shurks is mighty rank."

The shark which had met with the dynamite ex-

plosion was one of a pair of the great "carcharodon" variety. They had come in on the edge of the Bank at the beginning of the warm season, and one of them had slipped up along the bottom to the wreck not a minute after the mate had placed the charge. The package had attracted his attention, and it was while nosing it the charge had exploded, tearing him almost to pieces. His mate was but fifty fathoms away, and came slowly up to examine the place where the crash occurred.

The female was about twenty feet in length. She was lean and muscular from long cruising at sea, and her hide was as hard as the toughest leather. Vertical stripes upon her sides, black upon the dark gray of her body, gave her the name of "tiger." Her jaws were a good eighteen inches across, and her six rows of triangular teeth formed the most perfect cutting machine for anything made of flesh. The long tapering tail and huge fins told of enormous power, and her heavy frontal development proclaimed her of that somewhat rare species of pelagic monster which is very different in disposition to the thousands of sharks that infest all tropical seas.

She came upon the body of her mate as he sank slowly down, shattered and torn from the explosion. He lay motionless upon the clean coral bottom, and as she nosed him she came to the grisly wounds and knew he was dead. The feeling that the floating object above was responsible for his end took possession of her instinctively. He, her mate, had travelled with

her for months and over thousands of miles of ocean. There was an attachment similar to that in evidence among the higher animals, and sullen fury at her loss grew against the thing above. It was like the implacable hatred of the cobra snake for the slayer of his mate, the snake who will follow the slayer's trail for miles to wreak vengeance. And as the monster's fury was growing, the black diver was preparing to make a plunge for the money within the brig's bilge.

"Gimme a line," said the black man. "If dere is another feller like de one we busted down dere, yo' kin pull me back ef he don't git a good hold o' my laig. De water is mighty roiled yit, en I'd like to see a bit o' the bottom. 'Pears to me I seen something movin' astern dere."

The captain passed a line, and he fastened it around his waist. The rest of the crew stood looking on. Then taking a bag rolled tight in one hand to open below and fill with the silver, he gazed anxiously around the surrounding sea again.

"Here goes," said the big mate, "but I reckon it's de debble himself dat's waitin' fer me, I feels it sho'."

He went down with a straight plunge without any splash, and they watched him until he disappeared under the bends.

The mate had his eyes in use as he swam swiftly towards the hole made by the explosion. He watched the shadows upon the coral bottom in the dim light that penetrated the depths. The huge shadow of the brig cast a gloom over the white rock, and at the depth

of her keel objects were hard to distinguish, except out beyond where the sunshine filtered down. He knew the location of the hole, and headed straight for it until the black and ragged mouth of the opening showed before him. He had just reached for it when a form shut off the light behind him. At the same instant the dread of something horrible flashed through his brain. He turned instantly to see the giant mouth of a monstrous shark close aboard, the teeth showing white against the dark edge of the throat cavity.

There was but a moment to spare. He must get away in the fraction of a second, and his quick mind, used to emergencies, seized upon the only way possible.

The line about his waist was still slack, and he dove headlong into the black mouth of the hole in the brig's bilge. The opening was just large enough to let him through, the splintered edges raking his back sorely as he entered. Then he turned quickly, hoping to see the monster sweep past.

The outline of the hole showed dimly, a ragged green spot set in inky blackness. He was ready to make a dash outboard, and swam to hold himself close to it, for the tendency was to rise into the black depths of the submerged hull. Inside was total darkness, and the unknown, submerged passages to some possible open hatchway beneath his own vessel's bottom were not to be thought of for safety. He could hold his breath but for a very short time longer, and he was more than twenty feet below the surface of the ocean.

Even as he swam his foot struck something solid above him. He watched the hole and had just about decided that the monster had passed when the hole disappeared from view.

He knew he had not moved, for he could feel the stillness of the water about him. With a growing feeling of horror he groped for the opening.

In the total darkness he thought he was losing the instinct of direction. The danger of his position was so deadly that, in spite of his iron nerves, a panic was taking possession of him. To be lost in the hold of a sunken wreck appalled him for an instant. He must act quickly and accurately if he would live. The precious moments were passing, and his heart already was sending the blood with ringing throbs through his head. He made a reach ahead, and as he did so the greenish light of the hole in the bilge came again before him. He struck out for it powerfully. Then it failed again, but as it did so he made out the form that was closing it. The great head of the shark was thrust into the opening, withdrawn again as though to try to get a better position to force its way in, and then came total blackness.

The mate was failing fast. He had been under water more than two minutes. He saw that it was certain death to force the entrance. Outside waited the monster who would cut him to pieces before he could reach the surface and help from his vessel. It was a horrible end. The thought of a mangled form being devoured into the bowels of such a creature decided

him. Any death but that. He hesitated no longer, but with maddening haste he swam upward into the blackness, groping, struggling through doors and passages, wildly, aimlessly trying for a blind chance that he might at last come through the hatchway into the sea above.

He had cast off the line to his waist as soon as it came taut, and instantly it flashed upon him that he had severed the last link between himself and his men. On and on he struggled, the bright flashes of light which now began to appear before his eyes, caused by the strain and pressure, made him fight wildly forward, thinking that they came from the light outside. He knew he was lost. The picture flitted before him of the men hauling in the line. Then the silence of the deck in the sunshine and the looks of his shipmates, the case of "lost man." He had seen it before when he was upon the deck, and now it was his turn below. A bulkhead brought him to a sudden stop. He reached upward and found the solid deck. It was no use. He gave one last gigantic stroke forward along the obstruction and started to draw in his breath, which meant the end. Then his head suddenly came out of the water into air, and his pulses leaped again into action.

The pressure was not relieved upon his lungs, and it was some moments before he recovered. Then his great strength came back to him and he began to grope about in the blackness until his feet came in contact with a step. He felt along this and found that it was

evidently a companionway leading to the deck above. He put forth his hands into the space overhead and found a solid roof but a foot or less above the surface of the water he was in. Then it dawned upon him that he was beneath the coamings of the hatchway, and the air was that which had been caught under the top as the brig had settled. She had only been sunk about fifty-five hours, and the air had not found its way through the tight cover overhead. It was compressed by the pressure of the water above it. It was only about twelve feet to the surface from where he now rested, and if he could get free he might yet get away safely. The shark was probably below under the bilge, trying to get in the hole and would not notice him if he came up through the hatchway. He could make a dash for the surface, and call for a line before the monster could locate him. The air within the small space was already getting used up while he waited to recover. There were not more than half a dozen cubic feet of it altogether, and he must work quickly if he would be free.

He now groped for the fastenings of the hatchway, hoping to seize them and force the slide back. The covering was of peculiar pattern, high-domed above the coamings, and it was for this reason that the air had failed to find its way through the front of the opening. He felt for the lock and finally found that the hasp was on the outside. He was locked below.

He had been away from the sloop for more than five minutes now, and the men aboard had hauled in



the line. It came fast enough, and some leaned over the rail watching until the end came into view. Then they knew, or fancied they knew, the story.

"Gone, by God," came the exclamation from the captain — "he was right — they always travel in couples —" Then he stood there with the rest, all gazing steadfastly down into the clear water of the Gulf Stream that now went past crystal-like and undisturbed. The dim forms of the coral showed below, but nothing like the shape of either man or shark was visible. The disturbed water from the blast had all gone to the northward with the current, and they wondered. If there were a monster lurking in the depths, he must be well under the brig's bilge in the deep shadow. The line told the story the eye failed to reach. It was not new, the story of a lost diver on the Bahama Bank.

They hung over the side and spoke seldom: when they did, it was in a low tone. There was nothing to do, for no one had the hardihood to make the plunge to find out what had happened. They must wait for the wrecking crew. Diving was not to be thought of again for hours.

Meanwhile the mate was below in the dome of the hatchway.

Finding that the slide was fastened on the outside, he put forth all his giant strength to force it. Planting his feet upon the after end, he managed to keep his mouth out of the water and get a grip upon the

hatch-carline. Then he strained away to burst the lock.

In the little bubble of compressed air the exertion caused him to pant for breath. He must hurry. The wood creaked dully. A jet of water spurted in his face. The slide was giving way, letting in the ocean from the outside, and in another moment the remaining space of air would be gone. With one tremendous shove he tore the carline loose. Then he clutched frantically at the splintering wood, and as the water closed over him he wrenched the slide loose and drove himself blindly through the opening. The next instant he shot upward, and in a moment he saw the light above. He came to the surface under the sloop's port quarter, bursting into the sunshine with a loud splash.

The captain heard the noise and hurried over to look. The mate's black head was just a fathom below him, and he quickly dropped him a line. Then willing hands reached over and he was dragged on deck. He had been below nearly a quarter of an hour.

Staggering like a drunken man the great mate lounged forward, his bloodshot eyes distended, and his breath coming in loud rasping gasps, a little thin trickle of blood running from his nose and mingling with the salt water pouring down his face. Men seized him and tried to hold him up, but he plunged headlong upon the deck and lay still.

It was nearly half an hour later before he opened his eyes and looked about him. All hands were around him, some rubbing his huge limbs and others standing

looking on, waiting to do what the captain might direct. Then he came slowly to and rose unsteadily to his feet. There was a feeling of relief and the men talked. The captain asked questions and plied his mate with whiskey.

The giant black stood gazing out to sea, trying to realize what had happened, and while he looked he saw a thin trail of smoke rising upon the southern horizon. He pointed to it without saying anything, and all hands saw it and stopped in their work to stare.

"It's the wreckin' tug from Key West," said the captain. "No more divin' to-day. Jest our bloomin' luck. Nothin' to hinder us from doin' a bit o' bizness. No danged shurks nor nothin' to stop a man, an' here we lose our chance."

"I reckon it's all right, cap'n," said the big mate, speaking for the first time. "I done quit divin' fer this season, ennyways. 'N' when I says I smells shurk, I means *shurk*. 'N' the fust man what begs me toe go under ag'in when I says that, I gwine toe break his haid."

## II

### The Wrecker's Reward

"Ef I wassent er lady, I'd knock yo' blamed haid off, yo' black rascal!" cried Julia. The big mate smiled at her softly, and made another pass to seize her; but she struggled free, for he would not hold her fast enough. "Don't yo' come 'round heah no mo'; I don't want no dealin's wif no sailor man."

"What' the good o' gettin' mad over a little squeeze, Sugar-plum?" grinned the black giant. "I ain't done yo' no harm — an' wouldn't fo' nothin', Jule. Yo' knows I ain't got no gal but yo'self."

"Youse a rascal, dat yo' is, 'n' ef I wassent a lady, I'd knock yo' cocoanut off'n yo' ugly haid!" said the indignant Julia, whose dignity had been ruffled by the sailor's amorous but powerful wooing. "I knows yo', comin' around dis house an' tryin' to fool a pore gal like me."

"No, Jule, I means everythin' I says, an' a lot mo' besides. I wants yo' to marry me, sho' 'nuff," said the big sailor earnestly.

Julia rapidly was soothing herself. There was something so strong and pleading in the man's voice that she almost forgot the liberties he had taken, and

looked at him keenly. "Aw, gwine away, yo' black man; whar yo' got money to marry a gal like me?" She was now smiling at him; but edging away into the doorway of the little cabin which stood by the coral roadway in Key West. She really did not dislike the sailor; for Bahama Bill had a reputation for being a good money-getter and a most excellent spender. As mate of the wrecking sloop *Sea-Horse*, he often came in with a few English pounds sterling, or a pocketful of good American dollars, earned in his business along the Great Bahama Bank. Three days, however, always was the limit of his prosperity.

Now he had been ashore for a week, and consequently was the possessor of nothing more than a clasp-knife, a dirty pair of trousers and jumper, and an old clay pipe. Shoes he had left at some friend's house for a trivial debt for a handful of cigars, and head-gear he did not need. He was more or less contented, and was entirely willing to enter into the married state, feeling with the utmost confidence that money was a plentiful article and easy for a man of parts to procure. His wild excesses seemed vain in the sober light of the tropic sunshine, and it manifestly was the time for him to settle down to a state of quiet bliss with Julia.

"I kin get plenty o' money, Jule," said he softly.

"When yo' shows me, den yo' cain talk wif me, an' not befo'," said Julia. "I ain't doin' no washin' 'n' ironin' for no one. I'se near eighteen now, an' I ain't married no one yet."

"But, Jule, I kin get money easy enough. Come here now an' let me tell yo' how I kin."

"No, sah, no monkeyin'," said Julia, edging farther into the doorway. "Yo' get de money fust, 'n' — 'n' — den — well, yo' knows — 'bout — 'bout — dat."

Then she softly but firmly shut the door. He caught a glimpse of her through the kitchen window, and she smiled and waved her hand so that he almost was tempted to force an entrance; but he remembered that the Cuban who owned the house would likely hear him and perhaps fill him with bird-shot. He gave one longing look, and strode toward the harbour. The wrecking sloop was to sail that day, sponging to the northward along the Keys.

The first few days were hard on him. He was solemn and lonesome in spite of himself, and his quiet behaviour was noticed by his shipmates. They made the remarks usual among rough men of the forecabin, but Bill took no notice.

"Here's a chance for a feller to make good," cried a Conch to a stout German sailor called Heldron: "Reward fer old man Sanches' boy who run off to sea in one o' them fruit-ships," and he read from an old paper as he lay in his bunk during the watch below.

"I know dot poy: he pad poy; but him fader big sight worse," said the German. "He make de worst seegar in Key West."

"Well, if I was a mate o' a ship I might make good on that, hey?" said Sam.

"Blamed sight easier'n spongin', to catch a little

boy," said another; "but I hear the old man is going to the eastward — heard of something down Fortune Island way."

And the conversation turned to business, while the mate smoked on in silence. That night they were speeding across the Florida Channel in spite of the threatening weather and heavy sea. By morning they were many miles off shore, and gradually had been forced to slow down. The wind, while now slacking up and becoming heavy with moisture and warmth, had been strong enough during the night to make the *Sea-Horse* shorten down to keep from forcing too heavily into the high, rolling sea.

It was dirty weather in the Gulf Stream. The flying scud streamed away to the northwest in little whirling bits of vapour. They tore along with the speed of an express train in a direction which seemed at a sharp angle to the heavy, steel-blue bank which swept in a mighty and majestic semicircle across the southern sky. High overhead the sky had a distant appearance, something peculiar and weird, for the storm-centre was advancing northward and gathering all straying moisture in its grasp. It made dark streaks in the heavens at a distance above the sea, and rays of the morning sun shone upon them with a brassy glare, as though the whole universe was incased in a colossal dome which darkened near the horizon. It seemed to absorb the failing light less and less as the line of vision rose toward the zenith.

With a line of reef-points tied in from the second

hoop on the mainsail to the cringle on the leach, which raised only a couple of fathoms in the air, the *Sea-Horse* lay upon the starboard tack. A bit of staysail forward hauled to the mast held her steady as she breasted the sea, staggering to leeward with the heave that, increasing, told of a mighty power behind it. The combing crests rolled white with a dull, rattling snore, and the beautiful blue colour of the warm stream was paling into a dark lead.

The sloop would throw her forefoot high in the air as the rolling crests would strike and sweep from under the now almost logy hulk. The brown of the copper-painted under-body showed in strong contrast to the dirty white above. Then she would drop with a sidewise, twisting motion, a little bow-foremost into the trough, and back her snub nose away from the onrushing hill before it, which sometimes would burst and smother her out of sight to the mast in a storm of flying water. Then she would drop again, sidewise and forward down the incline, the rush of foam on the decks sweeping through the side ports in the bulwarks, spurting and pouring over everything, and finally overboard, until the action was repeated.

Two men in their yellow oilskins were upon the quarter-deck; one lying prone abaft the rise of the cabin, gazed sullenly at the menacing sky. The other sat and held on the wheel, which was fast in a becket, with relieving tackles on the gear heaving it hard down, and he tried to get puffs of smoke from a pipe. The wind was getting too strong for smoking, and he



went into the companionway and called the mate to relieve him. Bahama Bill came up, and the Captain went below.

The big mate sat there watching the weather, and his face bore a good-humoured expression. The conditions suited his frame of mind. Away from the temptations of the beach, he was a different man from the fracas-loving ruffian when full of cheap grog. Captain Bull Sanders turned in for a short rest, knowing that the vessel was in good hands.

Below in the bunks of the cuddy five men lay in all possible positions to keep from being flung out. One read, or tried to read, the paper which told of the running away to sea of the rich cigar-maker's son and of the reward offered for his safe delivery into the bosom of his family. Others lay and talked. Another slept, grasping even in his slumbers at the bunkboards, and mechanically bracing his knee to hold himself during the wild plunges. The creaking and racking of the straining sloop blended with the droning roar overhead, punctuated now and then by a smashing crash as a sea would fall on deck; but the resting men paid little attention to either the noise or motion, until the Captain had finished his pipe.

He suddenly threw down the magazine he had been trying to read for some minutes, and glanced at the barometer on the bulkhead. "Goin' down all the time. I reckon we'll catch it," he said.

"Hurricane season began nigh a month ago," said a man significantly.

"It don't got here alretty yet, maybe," said Heldron.

"Must be," said a Swede.

There was a general movement. All hands reached for oilskins and without further orders followed the Captain on deck.

"How's the wind now, Bill?" bawled the Captain.

"Been easterly; but goin' toe th' s'uthard fast," said the mate. "Looks a bit dirty."

"Whew! Beginning to blow a bit, hey?" said the Captain, as a fierce squall struck them and roared past, sending a blinding cloud of spray and drift over them. The droning cry of the wind in the rigging increased, and the straining cloth stretched until the blast passing over it made a dull, booming, rushing sound of such volume that conversation was deadened in the noise.

It now was blowing with force. The sea was white under the steel-blue bank, which had risen until a twilight darkness was upon the ocean. The sky above was turning a dull gray, and the scud was darker against it, whirling along in torn masses before the squalls, which were becoming more frequent and violent. The wind was shifting southerly, and the shifts in the squalls told plainly of the danger of the approaching spot of low pressure, about which the squalls drew in with the spiral movement common to tropical hurricanes.

Bull Sanders looked anxiously at the lubber's mark. The sea was getting worse, and the sudden hot blasts of wind were more vicious. He was too old a sailor to be caught with loose gear. Everything already had

been done to snug the sloop down; but there was a limit to the strength of spars and lines. The mainsail might hold; but some of those hurricane squalls would blow away anything made of canvas, and he decided to take no chances. He got out his sea-anchor, or drag, and let it go from the weather quarter, passing the line forward with difficulty to the windlass. Then, just after a squall, all hands handed in the bit of canvas, rolled it up, and made it fast. The *Sea-Horse* now was going astern fast, pulling the drag with her which kept her head to the sea. Nothing more could be done for the time, and Sanders crouched in the wake of the cabin, watching ahead for the shift which would come.

"What's that?" he bawled into the mate's ear, and pointed to the eastward.

Just as the sloop rose upon a high crest, a dark speck showed for a moment on the eastern horizon. It was not far away; for it was too thick to see any great distance.

"Steamer," bawled the mate, "hove-to and going to the north'ard like blazes!"

"We're right in th' stream — if the wind holds southeast, he'll be all right."

"But it won't. It's shifting — be southwest in an hour — he'll be close to the bank."

"Gun Key?"

"We ain't more'n twenty miles to the south'ard o' Gun Key — 'bout sou'west-b'-south."

The squalls became fiercer and more frequent.

They were like blasts from an explosion, the wind roaring past with incredible power. Between them it was blowing at the rate of sixty miles an hour; but when they struck it was nearly double that velocity. The wrecking sloop sagged away to leeward, and the dangerous sea swept upon her during those rushes in a way that shook every bolt and fastening in the frame. She was beginning to make water a little, and the bursting sea which struck now and again sought out every crack and seam in the companion doors and hatchway. The men on deck were submerged repeatedly. For an hour and more they watched her making bad weather of it, and then came a darker colour in the gray above. There was a sudden squall of tremendous power. The vessel was hove almost on her beam ends as it took her forward of the beam, and she swung up to the drag barely in time to take the sea bow on. The lubber's mark swung slowly from left to right until it reached southwest.

"It's goin' fast," bawled the mate to Sanders alongside him.

"See that feller now?" asked the Captain.

The mate pointed to the eastward.

The dark smudge of the steamer's hull showed through the flying drift. While they looked a flash of white told of a heavy sea boarding her. She disappeared in the foam.

"Must have trouble with her engines," said Sanders.  
"She's goin' to lo'rard as fast as we be."

Bahama Bill was staring astern into the gray blank

where all things seemed to melt into chaos. Suddenly he called out, and all hands swung about and stared in the same direction.

"Gun Key light!" screamed Heldron, his eyes staring from their salt-burned lids.

"Will we go clear?" asked Sam, his voice steady, but his intense look telling of the tale of life or death he wanted to hear. They stared into the drift astern, and the squalls broke over them unheeded. The sea was quick and heavy, and to strike meant certain loss of the vessel. There was one chance in a thousand for any one to get ashore, should she fetch up on the coral bank. Yet there she was going to leeward fast in spite of the drag, and the tower of Gun Key light was rising under the lee. To the northward was the Beminis. She was getting jammed, and the chances were growing against her as the minutes flew by.

The steamer was farther to leeward. She had sighted the edge of the bank, and was trying to drive off into the Gulf Stream with the force of her crippled engines. A cross-head bolt had started, and under the terrific strain the starboard engine had broken down. She could not keep head to the sea with the port wheel, and had placed a tarpaulin in the mizzen-rigging to help hold; but it had forced her to leeward also, and she now was close to the edge of the Great Bahama Bank. The *Sea-Horse* still had between twelve and fifteen miles between her and the reef; but the ship had hardly ten, and was dropping back too

fast for any hope to clear unless the wind eased up suddenly.

Squall after squall followed the shift. It blew harder, if anything, and the Captain of the steamer, seeing that he must go on the bank, made ready to pile his ship up as high as possible in the hope of saving some of the passengers and crew. To go upon the submerged part of the reef meant death to all hands. He must run upon the coral above the surf, and get as high up as he could. Then if the outer edge was steep, he might get his bow near enough to dry land to get the people ashore.

The crew of the *Sea-Horse* watched him as he went slowly in. In an hour after the westerly shift he was so close that the white coral showed through the blinding clouds of spray thrown up by the sea on the reef. Then, by hard work, he managed to get some head sail on the ship and start in for Gun Key.

She ran the half-mile between her and the beach at a tremendous pace. Lifting upon a sea, she rushed shoreward and struck, swung, lifted again, and then was hove solidly broadside into the surf. The men on the wrecker saw her strike. When she stopped a great burst of white told of a smashing sea going over. The slanting spars and funnel told how high she had hit, and the huge, bursting clouds of white water smothering her told of the rending power that she was exposed to in that surf. The hundred yards between the bow and the sand was a churning, boiling stretch of whiteness.

"That's the end of her," said the mate. "Looks like we're in fer the same thing."

In silence the rest watched the wreck. They were going in themselves; but the fate of the ship held their attention in spite of the death that they knew lay in the white line to leeward. It had been blowing now for four hours with hurricane force, and as they went in within a mile of the surf the shifting squalls swung more and more to the westward. Then it began to ease suddenly. Between gusts there was not more than a stiff gale. It was growing brighter, and they knew that they had missed the storm-centre, which must have passed to the eastward.

"Get the mainsail on her — we'll poke her to the s'uth'ard!" bawled Sanders.

Led by the mate, the men lay forward, and working for life raised the balance-reefed mainsail. Bahama Bill lay flat on his stomach, knife in hand, while they cleared the forestaysail and ran it up. Then he cut clear the drag. A wave of the hand, and Sanders filled the vessel off on the starboard tack, and as it went the dull booming thunder of the surf came up against the gale.

"If the wind keeps goin' we'll poke her off yet," said Sanders as the mate came aft.

"Ay, we'll poke her out to sea; but I could swim that surf good an' easy," said the mate quietly.

The Captain grinned, and looked at his giant form, its huge proportions made all the larger by the loose-fitting oilskins.

"Mebbe you'll git a chance yet," he said. "If it had blown half an hour longer, you cud ha' tried."

They worked off that afternoon, getting sail up as the wind slacked. At night they kept the light in sight, and the next morning were standing back for Gun Key under a single-reefed mainsail with a fine strong northerly wind and clear sky. The steamship lay over on her side in the surf, which broke over her in sheets of foam and spray. The sea had gone down; but there still was enough to tear up the craft. The masts and funnel and nearly all the superstructure had gone. Even the iron sides were smashed, twisted and bent, the plates starting and ripping clear of the rivets under the smashing blows of the sea. No sign of life showed aboard; but as she was high up on the bank there was no doubt that men could live. The *Sea-Horse* ran close enough to give the crew a chance to read the name *Orion* on the stern.

"One o' them new ships," said Bill. "She was in Key West last time we ran sponges."

They ran as close to the surf as they dared, and let go both anchors. Paying out cable, the sloop soon came within fifty fathoms, and then stopped; for the sea rose just under the stern, and burst a few fathoms farther in.

"Gimme a line," said the mate.

Sam and Heldron brought forth a coil of whale line, and the black man stripped for the plunge. He went over the side without a splash, and they paid out fathom after fathom until his black head showed close



to the bow of the ship, which had settled inshore and lower. Then they saw him disappear around it, and they waited. Five, ten, minutes passed, and then a form showed upon the high stern. It was the mate, and he waved to haul line.

Heldron went over the taut line next, followed by a Swede and Sam. Then the line was slacked off, and the big mate, taking a new one, plunged to leeward and made his way ashore. Half-fish, the diver went through the surf without accident and joined the light-keeper and his assistant on the beach, where they were waiting to do what they could to save those on the wreck. A line they had sent in on a buoy had parted, and the man upon it had been drowned.

The mate went back aboard, and managed to get the ten passengers and rest of the crew ashore without accident. All had gone except an uncouth-looking lad, the ship's galley-boy, in whom no one took interest enough to care whether he got ashore or not. Dirty, dishevelled and frightened beyond words, the lad crawled out of his hiding-place and begged the big mate to take him in.

As he had been calling and looking through the ship for disabled men, the Captain having told him his crew, the mate seized the lad without further words and plunged over the side. The boy was the last person unaccounted for.

"Seems to me I seen yo' befo', sonny," said the mate as he drew him clear of the surf. "Don't yo' live in Key West?"

"Oh, yes, I know you," said the lad, grinning.

The mate held him out at arm's length. "Ain't yo' Jimmy Sanches?"

The grin died away from the lad's face. "You won't take me back, will you, Bill?" he said.

"I reckon I'll have toe, Jimmy."

The next day the *Sea-Horse* sailed for Key West with the first claim for salvage, and a small boy who tried to run away at the last minute, causing the mate a chase to the lighthouse before he recaptured him.

"You've hit it fair this trip," said Sanders. "I reckon as ye ain't thinkin' about whackin' up on the reward, hey Bill?"

But the mate said nothing, his rheumy eyes looking far away toward the southern horizon, where he expected to see the spars of the shipping in Key West rise above the sea. He was thinking, and it caused his heavy and seamed jaws to set and line up into a deep scowl. Julia worked for the rich Sanches, and their reception of a ragged and half-sober seaman had not been hospitable. Yet here was his chance.

The next day the wrecking sloop rode at anchor close to the beach, and Sanders made ready to get his load of perishable goods ashore and notify the authorities of the disaster up the bank.

"Don't take me back!" whispered Jimmy as Bill swung him into the small boat, and the big mate was silent as the men rowed ashore.

On the way up the street the mate walked slowly, holding the boy by the hand.

"You know what a feller my stepfather is, Bill. Don't take me back!" pleaded Jimmy.

A steamer was clearing at the coal dock, and the mate stopped to look at it. Then he suddenly looked down at the boy. "Kin yo' make it, sonny?" he asked, and he let go of the boy's hand. Like a flash the lad ran to the string-piece, balanced a moment, and then sprang to the rail of the ship astern without those on board noticing him. It was gathering headway, and in a few moments was steaming out to sea, leaving the big mate staring after her, and the few men who had cast off her lines clearing up the rubbish in the wake of her gangway.

"I come back toe tell yo', Jule, dat I ain't in the money racket," said Bill, half an hour later. "I ain't no perliceman — I'm a sailor."

"Whatcher mean, Bill?" asked the damsel, keeping inside the door.

"Nothin' — only if yo' is sho' nuff goin' toe marry me, gal, yo'll have toe take yo' chances — same as me."

"Chances? Whatcher mean by chances, man?"

"What I says," said Bill, solemnly.

She saw that he was not in liquor. He sat silent and solemn for a long time, until finally she opened the door a little wider.

"I reckon I ain't scared o' takin' — usual risks — Bill."

"I would like to borrow five dollars from ye, Bill," said Sanders when the mate got back aboard.

The giant black scowled at him.

"Didn't ye git the money yet?"

"I ain't naterally quarrelsome," said Bill; "but if I hears any mo' erbout dat money, dere's likely toe be some daid men 'roun'."

### III

#### The Mate of the "Sea-Horse"

HE stalked in behind the captain of the *Caliban* to the desk in the consul's office at Key West, where the clerk signed on the men. His six feet three inches of solid frame almost filled the doorway as he entered, and he scowled sourly at the group already there. His black face was lined and wrinkled and bore traces of a debauch, but in spite of his sinister expression his eyes told of a good-natured steadiness of temper. The bloodshot whites and heavy lids told plainly that he was a diver, and his peculiar accent, giant frame and general muscular development proclaimed him a Fortune Islander, a Conch of the Great Bahama Bank.

"Nationality?" droned the clerk, in a dull monotone, as he came forward.

"American," he answered, distinctly.

The captain looked at him.

"Where from?" droned the clerk, filling in the blank.

"Jacksonville," he answered, in a deep tone, fixing his eyes upon the man's face.

The clerk smiled a little, but said nothing. It was not his business to argue, and he knew the weakness

of the reefer. He had signed the giant on to more than six different vessels within the past two years and each time he had solemnly sworn he was a native of a different country from the last one named. He had now become a citizen of the United States, having reserved this honor for the seventh and last time to sign.

The age of the giant fluctuated. Once he had had an indistinct remembrance of being about twenty-five; now he had leaped suddenly to forty. Something had evidently made him feel aged, and the clerk was amused, for he felt that it must indeed have been a heavy debauch to produce such an effect.

The Islander, or rather the American now, glanced uneasily at the ship's papers. He was signing on for a cruise in a yacht, and the United States articles with their red spread-eagle upon their edges attracted his attention. He could not read the announcement of the government "whack," or ration, as prescribed by law, and he had heretofore signed without looking. Now the papers interested him, and he bade the clerk read them. His voice was low and gentle, but it had nothing except command in each word, and this annoyed the clerk. He read slowly and with bad grace, looking up now and then at the captain, who stood waiting for his man and giving a glance which told plainly that here was a pirate who would probably make no end of trouble aboard his ship. But men like the Conch were extremely rare and he would have him, so he waited impatiently while the clerk read and the

rest listened, hearing probably for the first time in their lives the contents of a set of articles which they had always treated with the high disdain existent in all sailors. When the clerk finished, the giant took the pen in his fingers and scrawled "Bahama Bill" in large, wabby letters to his place on the list as second mate for a voyage to some port north of New York, three months and discharge.

"S'pose you write William Haskins under that?" said the clerk, sourly. The giant growled out something, but did as told. Then the papers were finished.

The captain led the crew down to the vessel, the mainsail was hoisted, and as the anchor broke clear and the headsails were run up, the little gun upon her quarter crashed a salute which echoed and reechoed over the quiet harbour. Then the *Caliban* stood out into the Gulf Stream and was off, leaving the loafing Cubans and listless Conches upon the docks, gazing after her over the heaving blue surface streaked and darkened by the breath of the trade-wind.

The *Caliban* was a well-appointed yacht, and her master was a yacht-captain. That is, he was not a navigator, but simply a Norwegian sailor who had had the address to impress the owner favourably, and consequently, there being no examination for a license necessary, the owner had placed him in command in the usual manner. The chief mate was a square-head like the master, the owner allowing the captain the choice of officers, retaining only the cook and steward as his own protégés for the comfort of the cabin.

Under a schooner rig, the vessel had cruised through the West Indian waters, and had lost her second mate and crew the day she touched at Key West, the party making the "pier-head" jump the day after being paid off. In disgust, the owner left her and took passage for the fashionable hotel at Miami, leaving his captain to find a crew and follow as soon as possible.

The morning of the second day out, the yacht swung around Cape Florida and stood into Biscayne Bay, rounding to on the edge of the channel near the large and fashionable hotel, and dropping her hook, the rattle of her anchor-chain was drowned in the crash of her six-pounder. The captain went ashore in full uniform, and the first officer turned in, leaving the second mate in charge leaning easily upon the rail and gazing after the vanishing form in gold braid.

The uniform of the second mate was a misfit. There were no clothes among the slops that would fit his frame, but he gloried in a cap with braid stuck rakishly on his head, and while his legs were incased in white ducks rolled to the knees, his huge torso was covered by no more than a coarse linen shirt. This he wore split up the back and open in front, and he was comfortably indifferent to the excellent ventilation it afforded.

It was early in the morning and few people were stirring near the great hotel. The captain disappeared in the direction of the town, and while the second mate gazed, he saw a boat pulling rapidly toward him from the hotel dock.



Soon a man, rowed by a boy, came alongside.

"Is the owner aboard?" he asked, nervously.

"No, sah," said Bill, squinting at him.

"Who's in command?" he inquired.

"Me, sah."

"Well, don't fire that gun again. You scare all the invalids in the hotel. We can't have our people frightened this way."

"She goes agin at eight bells," drawled Bill. "Have to raise de colours by him. If you don't like dat little gun, jest please move yer shack."

"Don't you dare to talk to me like that! Do you know who I am?" bawled the man, standing up.

"Naw, I don't know yer — an' de wust is, yo' clean forgot me. Now don't yo' git too noisy, Peter Snooks, er whatever yer name is — ef yer do, I'll set on yer. If yer don't like de noise, move yo' shack. I ain't got no orders to pull de hook."

The man swore and threatened, but the second mate smiled good-naturedly, until the man rowed away vowing vengeance.

"That's the dockmaster, sir," said a sailor standing near. "He'll make a lot o' trouble — I know him."

"Fergit him," said the second mate, in a low tone, but in a manner which closed the incident.

At eight bells the gun crashed a salute, and, either by chance or otherwise, it pointed directly at the windows of the huge edifice filled with the rich Northern guests. The glass fairly rattled with the shock.

The day wore on without incident, until the captain

came aboard, a bit the worse for liquor and with the news that the owner had left for St. Augustine, leaving orders for the yacht to follow.

It was quiet, and the schooner rode at anchor in a bay of pond-like smoothness. The men lounged about the decks or gazed over the side at the bottom, which could be seen through the clear water. They would stand out at sunrise, but the captain told no one of this intention, and those ashore expected her to be a fixture of a week or more. The sun went down in a bank to the westward and the semi-tropical night came dark and quiet upon the sea.

Through the deepening gloom, a shadow came stealing around the wooded point of Cape Florida. With her mainsail well off to the gentle southerly breeze, the wrecking-sloop *Sea-Horse* slipped noiselessly through the water, swinging around the channel buoy and standing like a black phantom for the mouth of the Miami. She came without a sound, not even a ripple gurgling from her forefoot; and not a ray of light showed either from her rigging or from her cabin-house. At the wheel, a figure stood silent in the night, a slight turn of the spokes now and then being the only movement to show that the image was that of a man steering. Strung along the deckhouse and rail lay six other human forms, but they were as quiet as though made of wood. Not even the glow of a pipe relieved the silent gloom. The wrecker drew near the yacht. The man at the wheel leaned slightly forward over the spokes and peered long and searchingly at

her from under the main-boom. Then she drifted past, and as she did so eight bells struck, sounding clear and musical from the forecastle. In the glare from her anchor-light, a giant form showed upon the yacht's forecastle-head — the black second mate, who was taking a look at the anchor-cable before settling himself for a smoke. The wrecker passed and disappeared around the point, and the second mate of the *Caliban* stretched himself along the heel of the bowsprit and watched the distant loom of the keys whence the low, murmuring snore of the surf sounded. Two bells struck and aroused him for a moment. The man on lookout asked permission to go below for a bit of tobacco, and then after he had watched his figure vanish down the hatchway, the mate turned toward the shore where the lights sparkled over the bay.

A slight rippling sound attracted his attention, and he looked over the side. It sounded like a large fish of some kind making its way clumsily along near the surface. The black water flared in places, and a continuous flashing of phosphorus shone along the cheek of the bow when the tide was shoved aside. Something dark showed at a little distance, but it passed astern and the rippling sound died away. Haskins, who was half-fish from habit and as watchful as a shark, went to the taffrail and leaned over. The water seemed like ink in the gloom, but he scanned it steadily and patiently. Nothing showed upon the dark surface, and he smoked for half an hour, until his usually alert senses began to wander. He was getting sleepy.

Then the rippling sound began again on the offshore side. He remained quiet and listened. This time the rippling sounded like a fish going against the current, and the glare of the disturbed water showed now and again as the body approached. Suddenly it seemed as if the creature passed under the yacht's bottom. The rippling died away, and the second mate stepped to the side to see if it would rise again. Nothing showed in the blackness under her counter, but from down there came a peculiar scraping sound. It continued, and he peered over to see the cause. The raking stopped instantly. He remained quiet and it began again, a peculiar scraping as though something were scratching against the vessel's bilge.

Suddenly a sound of heavy breathing came from the water. Haskins started, drew himself down upon the rail and listened intently. Yes, he recognized it now, distinctly. It was the breathing of a man.

While he lay upon the rail listening, he was thinking rapidly. There were few men who would swim out in the bay at night, and there was none who would swim out there without some sinister object. He thought of the dockmaster and his talk of revenge, but he knew the dockmaster was not a diver. There could be only one or two men on the Florida Reefs for wrecking, and these men were among the crew of the *Sea-Horse*, the sloop in which he had been mate for the past season. Then he remembered a phantom-like shadow which had drifted past in the earlier hours of the evening, and he was satisfied he knew his man.

It was the captain of the wrecking-sloop, and his object was plain to the diver. It was an old game, a game he had indulged in many times himself in the days gone by. He knew the long, desperate swims through the dangerous waters of West Indian and Florida reefs; the fierce struggle alongside to hold the body silent in a tideway while with hook and bar the wrecker worked at the oakum in the seams just a strake or two below the water-line; then the inrushing flood and settling ship, and daylight finding a panic-stricken captain and mutinous and half-dead crew with swollen arms and aching backs from a night's hopeless work at the pump-brakes. He could picture the approaching wrecking-sloop, with her apparently amazed crew and the vulture-like descent upon the soon-abandoned vessel whose only damage was really the working out of several pounds of oakum from seams which were manifestly improperly calked. Then the investigation and salvage, for even when the marks showed plain of either bar or hook, there was never the slightest evidence against the wrecker.

Bahama Bill knew the game well, and he smiled a little as he listened. Then he took off his cap with the gold braid and laid it upon the deck, and leaned far out over the side. Suddenly, through the darkness, he made out a face looking up at him from the water. There was nothing said. He recognized the captain of the *Sea-Horse*, and he knew him to be a man who seldom wasted words. There was only the long, hard scrutiny, the study of man's mind by man; each try-

ing to fathom the other's thought, for the sudden resolve which always comes quickly to men of action.

While they gazed, a sudden noise from aft attracted attention. It was the surly mutterings of the drunken yacht-captain, who had come on deck for a breath of air. The sight of him annoyed the second mate. It caused a revulsion of feeling within him he could not understand. The responsibility of his position became apparent for the first time. Among his kind the rigid law of superiority and control had always obtained while afloat. Ashore it was different. There restraint was cast to the winds, and he had often been one of the wildest and most dangerous men in the seamen's resorts between Key West and Panama. Here the sight of the drunken captain made him quiet and thoughtful. Whatever relations he had intended should exist between himself and the wrecker, it was now plain to him that he was an officer holding a responsible position. It came to him suddenly at the sight of the incapable commander. He would maintain his dignity and responsibility.

This feeling was upon him before he was half aware of it, and he turned again to the man overside.

"Get away quick," he said, in a low tone.

The wrecker knew his meaning, and his resolve was taken. He would follow the game out. He had swum a full half-mile, and the stake he was playing for was high.

"It's a half share if you keep your mouth shut," said the wrecker. "I thought you had some sense."

"De dock-marshal tol' yo' I was heah," said Bill, "but he forgot to tell yo' I ain't de mate o' de *Sea-Horse*. Yo' clean side-stepped dat."

"If anything happens to me, the boys know you are aboard. Your friend the dockmaster saw to that. They burnt a nigger to the stake last week," said the wrecker, meaningly.

"Yo' better go ashore, Cap'n. I ain't de mate o' de *Sea-Horse*." His tone was low and measured, and it left no further room for argument.

The tipsy yacht-master had gone below again, gurgling the words of a ribald song. He had seen nothing. The deck was deserted by all save the second mate.

"Swim out," said Bill, decisively.

"Well, I'll rest a minute first," said the wrecker. He made his way forward and climbed upon the bobstay, the second mate going on the forecastle to watch him. The man on the lookout had not come from below yet, and the wrecker noticed it. He was furious at his former mate, and his hand felt instinctively for the knife in his belt. The Conch dared not hurt him, for the crew of the *Sea-Horse* would surely make him pay the penalty if he did. A call to the men aboard would put an end to wrecking operations, but the giant disdained any help. He would settle the matter quietly, as was best, and the men of the wrecking-sloop would have no real cause for revenge. The second mate had no desire to make unnecessary trouble

for himself. He would have to return some day for the reckoning.

The legs of the wrecker shone white below his trunks, and were in sharp contrast against the black water in which they were half submerged. The man was thinking quickly, and waiting a few seconds before making the desperate attack with his knife. Once rid of the mate, all would be clear for action. Haskins knew his man and suspected something, but he sat silent upon the knightheads and waited.

Suddenly he saw a long flaming streak in the water. The man on the bobstay swore furiously. There was a great splash, a hoarse cry, and the second mate was forward alone.

It was all so sudden, he had hardly time to realize its meaning. Then, as the man who had gone below rushed up, he seized his sheathed knife and plunged into the blackness ahead. A thrashing of the water to starboard located the wrecker, who had been seized by a dog-shark and was cutting and struggling wildly for liberty. His white legs, lying motionless and half submerged, had tempted the fish to strike. In motion and under water, the danger had been slight. Now the scavenger, who was about five feet long, had seized hold, and with its natural bulldog tenacity was pulling the wrecker steadily seaward in spite of his struggles. He had used his knife freely, for the fish made no attempt to draw him under. The small shark of the reef, for some reason, fights upon the surface, sinking only



after all resistance is over. It was to this peculiarity that the wrecker owed his life.

The big mate, Haskins, knew what had happened. He knew also the chances, and he drove ahead through the black water, leaving a flaming wake behind. The man on lookout, thinking the black giant had gone mad, dived below with the news that he had plunged overboard and committed suicide. At first, Haskins could only make out a slight disturbance in the water, which was rapidly moving toward the entrance. Then, as his eyes, long used to sea-water, made out the dark lump which was his former captain's head, he half rose from the sea and with tremendous overhand strokes fairly lifted himself forward, his knife grasped with point in front. In a few moments he was up with the fracas. The wrecker saw him coming, and called out. He seized him, and then all three went below the surface with the force of the fish's tug.

Reaching along the wrecker's leg, Haskins drove his knife with force just behind the shark's jaw-socket. The blow abated the scavenger's zeal, and they arose to the surface. A second lunge and the fish let go and disappeared. Then the wrecker's body relaxed, and Haskins was swimming upon the quiet surface of the bay, holding the sinking head above water.

Far away, the dark outlines of Virginia Key showed, a low black lump on the horizon. Beyond it, the dull snore of the surf came over the water. A good hundred yards against the tide, the anchor-light of the yacht shone. It would be almost impossible to drag

the insensible man to her, even should he dare. There was only one way out of the scrape, and Haskins with resolute mind saw it and began the struggle at once. He headed for the mouth of the river, where he knew the *Sea-Horse* lay waiting, just behind the point.

On through the blackness he swam. The first mile seemed endless, and still the lifeless form of the wrecker dragged helplessly in his wake. Another, and his teeth were shut like a vise and his breath was panting loudly over the quiet water. He turned the point, and saw the loom of the *Sea-Horse* as she rose at anchor beyond the shadow of the trees upon the banks.

Suddenly a man hailed in a low tone. The mate made no answer, but headed for the bobstays and grasped them. Then he rested. Half an hour later, the captain of the wrecker came to in his bunk and viewed his bandaged leg. A lamp burned dimly in the cabin, and he made out the form of the black mate lying in a bunk, snoring loudly. Several of the crew were sitting around waiting until he could give the details of the affair, and now they crowded forward. The plot was a failure owing to Haskins. He told of the huge mate's interference and of the stroke of the dog-shark. Then they burst forth with imprecations so loud that Haskins awoke. Knives glinted in the dim light and a half-dozen sinister faces formed a crescent above him, but he was very tired. He gazed for nearly a minute through half-closed lids at the threatening men. He thought he heard the captain calling weakly for the men to let him alone. What he had

done for him was not entirely lost. Then he gave a snort of contempt and turned his back to them and slept.

Even the boldest held back. The conscious power of the man and his disdain for them all were too much even for the most desperate. They drew away sullenly and listened to their captain, and then as his words, whispered low, began to have effect, they left the cuddy. Silently they hoisted the mainsail and carefully drew in fathom after fathom of the cable. The jib was hoisted and the *Sea-Horse* stood out and passed like a dark shadow from the harbour. As the sun rose and gave colour to the sea, the deep blue of the wind-broken surface told of the Gulf Stream. The land had disappeared astern.

In the early morning, the yachtmaster put sail on the *Caliban* and stood out for New York. He had a full crew lacking a second mate, and they carried the story North how they had shipped a black giant who had gone mad during the night and plunged to his death over the knightheads.

## IV

### Barnegat Macreary

"PUT that fellow in the lee rigging and let him chuck the lead awhile," said Captain Sanders. "Sink me, but he is a queer one. Where did ye say he hailed from?"

"Hey, Peter, where did yo' hatch?" asked the big black mate in a voice deep and loud enough to be heard half a mile. The man he addressed was standing near the mast explaining to the wrecking crew gathered about him how he had once been quartermaster in a man-of-war. He looked aft at the hail.

"I'm from the Berhammers," said he.

"Born there?" asked the captain.

"No, I live on the Great Berhammer — I'm a sailor man, sir."

"Put him in the lee rigging an' let him sound across the Bank. If he knows half as much as he says he does, he'll see us across all right enough. It's getting mighty shoal now. Look at that nigger head pokin' up yander." And he pointed to a piece of coral that came within a few feet of the surface of the clear blue water. The bottom was plainly visible two fathoms

below and the wrecking sloop, *Sea-Horse*, needed at least one to go clear with the rise and fall of the sea.

"Git to lorard there, quartermaster, an' heave the lead," bawled the mate, looking the man squarely in the eyes.

"But I shipped as a sailor ——"

"Git thar quick an' sudden," roared the black giant, rising from the cuddy hatch coaming. He had heard the loud tone of the man forward telling his latest yarn.

A look of amazement and concern came over the face of the man from "Berhammer," but he hesitated no longer. Seizing the lead which lay always ready in a tub of line near the windlass, he made the lee side and hove it far ahead.

The *Sea-Horse* was passing over the Great Bahama Bank near its extreme northern end, and at a part where even the mate had never been. She had stopped off the island a few hours before to take on the stranger for pilot and continue her way to a wreck reported on the eastern edge of the shoal water.

"Plenty o' water here," he yelled, as the lead-line came perpendicular.

"How much?" asked Sanders.

The man hove again.

"Not much water here," he cried, as the line suddenly stopped running out.

The mate started forward, looking over the side.

"Not much water here," called the man again.

There was a sudden jar, followed by a grinding, grating sound from below.

"Deedn't I tole yo' so," sang the fellow in an even tone, heaving the lead again as though nothing had happened. A sounding slap from the big mate's hand finished proceedings in the rigging, and a volley of oaths from Sanders, coupled with orders to get a kedge anchor out to windward, put new life in the scene upon the sloop's deck.

Macreary, still smarting from the big black mate's blow upon his stern-sheets, fell to with the rest, and by dint of much heaving upon a new hawser bent to an anchor carried well to windward, the *Sea-Horse* was finally hove off the bank. They were materially helped in this by the gentle heave of the swell, which lifted the wrecking sloop easily and dropped her with a crash at each sea.

When she floated there were several very discontented men aboard who looked as though they would make it squally weather for the pilot before they reached the wreck on the Bank.

The wreck of the *Ramidor*, a small Brazilian bark bound for Rio, lay upon the edge of the Bahama Bank in about a fathom of water. She had been driven there in a heavy gale from the eastward and had gone in upon the shoal about a quarter of a mile, lying upon her bilge where the sea in calm weather just broke clear of her, the wash of foam striking against her high black sides and spurting skywards. In a heavy sea, the break was far to windward of her, and in

consequence she was in no immediate danger of going to pieces with the smash. She had been sighted by several wreckers, and the *Sea-Horse* and *Buccaneer* were on their way to her, each hurrying with all speed to claim the salvage. The *Buccaneer* was at work on the Caicos Bank, and the *Sea-Horse* at Cape Florida when the news reached them. The former manned by English negroes and navigated by a long, lean Yankee skipper, had stood to the eastward and northward, coming in sight of the wreck about the time the *Sea-Horse*, picking her way across the shoals, raised the slanting topmasts of the *Ramidor* beyond a dry coral bank which forced her to make a long détour to the southward. She had taken on the pilot to save time and cut across the shoal places as close as possible, and he had run them ashore most ignominiously when within ten miles of their destination.

Macreary finished coiling down the hawser after the kedje was hoisted aboard, and then he joined the rest who sat upon the hatch. He was much abashed at heart, but tried not to show it, swaggering with a careless air among the men who glared at him.

"Blamed fine quartermaster you make," snarled one; "must have been on one o' them ten-foot sand barges wot takes offal to sea an' dumps it. I once knowed a fellar like you wot was quartermaster o' one."

"Captin', too, hey?" growled a Swede. "Crew were a yaller dawg?"

"Where did yo' learn pilotin'?" asked a Conch,

grinning and spitting as close to the pilot's toes as he could without hitting them.

"I'm learning it now," said Macreary, cheerfully, sitting down and gazing over the sea to where the tiny speck of the bark's topmast showed above the horizon. He was not going to show how absurd and mean he felt to that crowd, so he sat and gazed apparently calm and unruffled, without a sign of the burning shame which seemed to stifle him.

He was now silent and thinking. There was a short cut along a narrow and tortuous channel which would let the vessel out to sea close to the point of the dry coral bank, or end of Cay. He thought he might know it, although he had only been through twice before. The wreck lay only a few miles beyond, and even now the white glint of the rival wrecker's sails showed plainly that he would board the prize first and claim the salvage. But the memory of the big black mate's hand was too strong upon him, and he kept silent. The *Sea-Horse* was working up behind the reef and it was noticeable how smooth and sheltered the sea was in its lee. It would make a fine harbour for a vessel caught working upon the wreck in a heavy easterly, if she could navigate the channel. But the master of the *Sea-Horse* knew nothing of the channel, and he would have sooner thrown the pilot overboard than trusted him again. He stood out behind the Cay and made a good offing, reaching well off into the open ocean in spite of the fact that he would have ten miles further to go.



But Macreary sat silent and watched the horizon where the black speck rose. He was not thinking about the wreck. To him it was nothing whether a Conch or two should make a little money from the disaster of a sailor. His thoughts were back with the strange men he had left upon the Cay of the Great Bahama, the little band led by the tall and muscular Jones, leader of the Sanctified people who sought refuge from the strife of the world upon the sun-beaten reefs of the Bahama Bank.

Jones had taught him to read. Jones had read to him from the Book of all Books, the relic of an ancient literature, revised, rewritten and put together in somewhat disconnected pieces, the Bible of the most enlightened people upon the face of the world. And in it he had heard the words of wisdom as set down by men who had gone before, men who had lived their lives and who had learned from experience. And the philosophy of these men he believed was true, for they had lived their lives out and had left behind them the results of years of life. It was not the one tale of a single man, which must necessarily be narrow and worthless, but it was the gatherings of the teachings of many who had been in positions to learn. Yes, what Jones had read him was the philosophy of ages. And Jones had read to him, "Hide not thy light under a bushel," and he had told him that it meant to use what talents he possessed, to try to do what he thought he was able to — and not hang back. He felt abashed and ashamed beyond expression at his failure, for he

had believed he was a fit pilot over the Bank. He founded his belief upon the fact that he had gone fishing many times in a small skiff in the vicinity of the island and had twice gone southward along the edge of the Bank; he had noticed many times how the water shoaled from the deep ocean to the white water of the coral reef. It was hard to account for his failure, he thought, with men aboard who must have seen the bottom as plainly as he, himself, could — and then the big black man's mortifying stroke —

The vessels stood toward the wreck under the impetus of the easterly breeze, the *Buccaneer*, a point free, raced up and let go her anchor close under the bark's lee in just enough water to float. Then her skipper putting forth in a small boat boarded the *Ramidor* just as the *Sea-Horse* came through the breakers on the edge of the Bank. She cleared the bottom by a few inches, although the wash of the sea swept her decks and drenched the men standing by to take in the mainsail and let go the hook. Sanders ran her well in behind the wreck and rounded to, scraping up the sand with the keel, and anchored behind the *Buccaneer*. It was close work and a heavy sea would drop both vessels heavily upon the reef. They must make good use of the smooth water, and Sanders hailed his lucky rival to get what he could.

"See ye got a wrack there," said he, calling to the long Yankee skipper, who smiled at him from the bark's quarter-deck.

"Talk like ye never see it afore. Wonder ye didn't

notice it bein' as ye were headin' this way. Strange how these Dagoes pile up thar ships," answered the skipper of the *Buccaneer*.

"Don't suppose ye want to whack up, hey? An' have us turn to an' help with the cargo?"

The long skipper squirted a stream of tobacco juice over the side in derision.

"I reckon ye think we're out here fer our health, hey?" he roared. "What d'ye think we're doin' around here anyways? I want to let ye know right sudden that this wrack is mine — ye keep off. Ye know what'll happen if there's any monkey business. I won't stand any foolishness."

"'Twouldn't do fo' toe nab him, hey?" asked the black mate of the *Sea-Horse*, turning to his captain. "We kin take him, sho', an' make a divide with it. We got here about the same time he did."

"I'm afeard we better not," said Sanders. "Too many witnesses — they'll swear they got here first — I've a notion to pitch that pilot overboard."

The beaten sloop lay all that day off the wreck, her crew fuming and her captain and mate trying to devise some means to get a hold upon the bark. At dark Sanders rowed over to the *Buccaneer* and tried every means from bluff to bribery to get in a claim, but the *Buccaneer's* crew held out solidly. Finally they compromised matters by signing on as labourers at a dollar and a half per day to help the *Buccaneer's* crew to work the wreck. It was the best they could do for

the present and they went sullenly to work with the hope something would turn up to favour them.

Two days passed and the bright summer weather held. The sea was smooth as glass and the wreckers lay in safety. Far away to the northward the glint of the dry coral bank showed at low water. Nothing else broke the eternal blue line of the horizon.

Macreary was not turned to with the rest but kept aboard the *Sea-Horse* as ship-keeper. He helped cook the meals and was kept busy with cleaning. As he was alone a good deal, he spent much time in gazing over the sea, figuring on the channel which led five or six miles to the northward to the deep water behind the dry bank. If they had only let him try it, he might have worked them through in time. It was crooked, worse than a letter S to sail through, but the bark was worth several thousand dollars to the salvors — and he had lost. He would have been well paid if they had made her in time.

The crew of the *Sea-Horse* took some pains to tell the wreckers how it was the fault of their pilot that they lost. The Conchs laughed at him in derision whenever they boarded the sloop at meal times, and he was so much set upon by both crews that he begged Sanders to put him aboard the first vessel sighted. The third day two more wrecking vessels came upon the scene, but as the bark was now pretty well stripped, the salvors would have none of them. One of the strangers stood away, but the other came to anchor,

leaving her mainsail up ready to go at a moment's notice.

"Hey, don't ye want a pilot?" asked the long skipper of the *Buccaneer*, calling to the stranger. His hail was the cause of much amusement to the two working crews. They stopped and looked over at the little vessel, whose three men sat in a row upon her rail watching the wreck.

"We've the best pilot on the bank," said Sanders, trying to hide his sarcasm by a frown. "We thought maybe as ye ware goin' on ye might want him."

"I reckon I'll take him," said one of the three. "I ain't goin' no farther'n th' Bahama, an' ef he don't mind he can take us across the Bank."

"Git him," said Sanders, "there he is," and he pointed to the *Sea-Horse* where Macreary sat fishing. Then all hands had a good laugh and went on with their work, hiding their amusement from the strangers. It would be a good joke. They would have the pleasure of seeing the vessel piled up before she drew out of sight.

The three men on the new arrival were in no hurry. They fished a little while and finally one of them rowed across the twenty fathoms of intervening water to Macreary, who had heard the conversation and was ready. As he dropped into the small boat he looked to the southward and noticed a heavy bank of cloud rising. He said nothing until aboard the sloop and then asked to look at the glass. It was falling rapidly.

"There'll be a bit o' dirty weather comin'," he said, as he came on deck and joined the fishermen.

"Is there air harbour round erbouts?" asked Captain James, baiting his hook. He was in no hurry to get under way.

"There's good water behind that cay up yander," said Macreary.

"How fer?"

"'Bout five mile."

"All right, we'll start just afore dark — kin make it in thirty or fo'ty minutes with a breeze, hey?"

"I reckon," said Macreary, looking anxiously at the weather to the southward. Then they hauled up fish for a couple of hours until the sunshine turned a brassy colour and finally died away as the cloud bank covered the western sky.

The men aboard the bark began to get nervous. Sanders went aboard the *Sea-Horse* with his mate and they hoisted the mainsail close reefed, making ready to get to sea in case of trouble. The skipper of the *Buccaneer* finally knocked off also, and soon the clanking of windlasses broke the silence of the tropical evening. They were getting ready to get away at the first shift to the eastward, for the sea would break heavily where they lay in a strong wind. There was much to carry away, but they would take no chances. The most valuable part of the wreck's belongings were already on deck waiting to be transferred to the *Buccaneer*, and she would lie by with a man aboard the bark to watch and take charge.

"I wouldn't be surprised if it blowed," said Captain James of the little sloop *Seabird*. "I reckon we'll stop fishin' an' pull out afore it's too hot. I wouldn't keer to be the man left in thet bark, hey?"

"If they abandon her, it's fair play all over agin to the first man what gets aboard," said one of his men. "I don't believe the wessel is badly hurt, anyways."

The heavy bank of cloud rose rapidly. A flash of lightning lit the gloom of the evening and the edge of the pall swept past overhead. It was travelling rapidly. To the southward the growing darkness seemed to melt into the blackness above like a smooth black wall of mist. A murmur of unrest came over the sea, a weird far-reaching cry vibrating through the quiet atmosphere, rising and falling like the distant voices of a vast host.

Sanders, who had signed on his men as helpers, could gain nothing by staying. He had signed away his future rights, therefore he lost no time in getting up his anchor and standing out to sea with his canvas shortened for trouble and everything being made snug.

The *Buccaneer* crew were struggling with as much gear as they could carry to get it aboard their ship before the sea began to make if it blew. All hands were overside hurrying the work, and even the two men who were to remain aboard to take charge were helping and had left the bark's deck when a line of white showed to the southward upon the black sea. There was a puff of wind, cool and whirling as though it had dropped from some great height in the realms

of snow. The surface of the heaving swell ruffled, a blinding flash of fire followed by a crash; then a few moments of silence broken gradually by a deep-toned roar growing louder and louder. The line of white bore down upon the vessels, and as it came the darkness grew blacker. There was a fierce rush of wind, and with a burst as though fired from a gun, the blast of the squall struck the vessels and bore them prone with its sweep.

The *Buccaneer's* mainsail tore to bits as she lay upon her beam ends, her anchor parted, and in a moment she was going out to sea, every man aboard of her struggling with the flying strips of canvas. The wind had come from the southward and with just enough slant to allow her to clear the shoal water and make the open ocean. Macreary, with nothing to do but watch the coming squall, let go the halliards of the *Seabird's* sail, and her crew had managed to get a line around it before the weight of the wind struck. The captain reached the wheel and managed to pay her off somehow, dragging the anchor which had been hove short as though it were a bit of iron hanging to the line. Then handing the spokes to his pilot, he pointed to the northward, where the dry bank of the cay had just disappeared in the storm.

"Git in — behind — harbour," he bawled, and as the words came brokenly above the roar, Macreary knew he meant to run the crooked channel for harbour behind the reef.

The two men hove up the anchor while the *Seabird*



tore along ten knots with nothing save her mast to pull with the wind. Macreary swung her first this way and then that, blindly, stupidly, and unreasoning, but with rising hopes as the wind beat down the sea into an almost level plain of water white as milk. He held her north by west, making as much westing as he could, blindly hoping to make enough inside the reef to clear the end of the bank and gain the shelter beyond. All was blackness ahead and there was no way of telling when he reached the dry bank; no way of telling when he should round her to and drop both anchors with every fathom bent on to hold them, but he kept on.

"Hide not thy light under a bushel," came the words of the tall preacher. They seemed to flit before his half-blinded vision. He who must make a living at something would do it at what he thought he could do best. He must surely know more about those waters than the Conchs who lived to the southward, for he had fished upon them for two years. His ideas about piloting were vague and absurd, but he did not know it. It seemed to him that all he must do was to show the way the best he could, and it was not in keeping with the teachings to hold back. It would be more immodest to feign ignorance of the banks than to admit a knowledge of them. He had known people who were so backward that they always waited to be sought out by others and pressed to do things, which by all nature they should have offered to do at once. To him these people were truly immodest and their very

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quietness seemed to savour of a tremendous egotism. They seemed so satisfied and complacent in their knowledge, so superior that unless they were flattered by being sought out and offered a handsome reward, they would rather carry their wisdom to the grave than offer it. It was "hiding a light under a bushel," in the sense the tall man of the Sanctified Band of pilgrims taught it.

The wind drove the little vessel wildly before it. The sea began to make astern, and as he turned his face to look backward a spurt of spray and foam half-choked him. The roar of the gale grew louder. The captain's voice came brokenly to him through the gloom, and he saw him standing close to the companion hatch gazing ahead and holding on with both hands, his face thrust forward and his sou'wester pushed back as though to aid him to see some mark to steer by to safety.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes flew by. If they missed the shelter of the reef and the deep water behind it, they would certainly pile up on the shoals beyond, where the sea would fall with tremendous violence in less than an hour. Already the lift astern was growing quicker and the white plain of water was rolling up into a dangerous sea. He swung the little vessel hard to port, thinking to find better water, and as he did so she took the ground heavily, throwing her captain with force against the coamings.

"Keep her off — breakers — windward," came the cry as from a great distance.

He rolled the wheel up mechanically and she was tearing away again into the darkness, going clear as though she had touched soft mud instead of hard coral rock.

A burst of wind tore over them with a droning roar. The little vessel lay down to the pressure. Then gathering herself upon a sea she rushed ahead.

The blackness grew thicker. Macreary could hardly see the loom of the mast forward. Then a flickering flare of lightning lit the storm and right ahead showed a strip of dry yellow sand. It was a mile off yet, but they were going fast. Macreary hove the wheel to port and kept it there until the little ship buried her starboard deck-strake in the foam.

"Will — make —" came the voice of the captain.

Macreary did not know whether she would or not, but he would try to, and setting his teeth hard he gave up all thought of answer. The minutes flew by. He knew they were going fast. They would go a mile in five minutes even with the lessened headway of the reaching vessel. How could he guess the time in that awful turmoil of roaring wind and sea? He waited and waited. She must be nearly there. The strain was getting awful. Would he go past? He must be up with the point now — but no, he would hold her a minute longer. It must be made or lost in one throw of that wheel, and to lose it meant death to all hands. The blackness ahead was solid. No eye could penetrate it ten feet. Oh, for another flash of lightning!

"Will she —" came the voice of the captain, questioning, querulous, borne back the few intervening feet through the flying atmosphere. He did not know and it angered him to have such a question asked.

How could he tell?

He was panting with exertion and smothered with drift and spray. Suddenly he hove the wheel to starboard. The little vessel leaped forward, straightened out before the gale, then rounded with her head to the eastward. It was done anyhow. If they were clear, all right. If they had missed, they would strike within five minutes.

"Get — anchors — all cable," came the voice of the captain.

Macreary could see nothing forward, but he knew the men were doing what they could to obey. Minutes passed, the vessel rose and fell, but she had not struck yet. He held the wheel, and closed his eyes. The sea seemed smoother. Ahead it was evidently smoother still. The great lift of the outside sea was growing less and less. Five minutes more and the *Seabird* was in another foam-covered plain of water which had no rolling sea.

"Go," came a cry. It was echoed by a faint shriek somewhere. A shaking of the vessel followed as the chain ran out. Suddenly she brought up and swung right into the eye of the storm, the rush of wind striking Macreary in the face and forcing his sou'wester back upon his head. There was a quick but light rise

and fall as the *Seabird* headed the sea, and Macreary lashed the wheel fast in the becketts.

A form brushed against him and the captain yelled in his face: "She's holdin' — both anchors with forty fathoms — can't get loose unless it blows the water off the earth," and then he pushed the hatch-slide and went below.

In a few minutes all hands were in the little cabin and a light was struck. It showed four men with streaming oilskins and soaking faces, whose expressions still bore marks of extreme anxiety. Three of them looked at each other and then cast glances at Macreary.

"That was a pretty good job, pilot," said Captain James. "We had a close call there once — suppose you got mixed with the steering gear, hey?"

Macreary said nothing. He was like a man who had suddenly awakened from a horrible nightmare.

"Well, you won't lose nothin' by this trip," went on the captain; "them fellows will be blown off fifty miles before morning — and there ain't a soul aboard the bark — she's oorn, and that's a fact."

## V

### At the End of the Reef

THE light-keeper at Fowey Rocks had been given a new assistant, and the new man was Bahama Bill, the giant wrecker and mate of a sponging sloop. He was a negro Conch, so-called on account of the diet upon which many of the native Bankers were supposed to live, the Conch proving an easy and nourishing meal for the lazy and incompetent reefer. But the name soon applied to all alike, and the Conch, instead of becoming a word of opprobrium, stood for all men who made the Reef or Great Bahama Bank their home.

William Haskins, otherwise known as Bahama Bill, was a Fortune Islander, and his acceptance of the keeper's position was but temporary, taking the place of the assistant who was absent on his quarterly leave. The head keeper, an old man, seldom left the light.

It was summer-time and the air was warm with the tropical heat of the coast. The distance from the land kept the lighthouse cooler than ordinary, but the hot Stream flowing past at a temperature of eighty-three degrees gave no cooling effect. The days of

the assistant's absence dragged slowly along, the old keeper tending the light with his usual care. Then came a season of frightful humidity and glaring sunshine, lasting many days, the mercury standing always at ninety-five or more.

Bahama Bill spent the warm weather loafing about the town of Miami, and as he was in no hurry to go back to the light, he took pains to spend what money he possessed in whatever finery he thought befitted his magnificent personal appearance best. Standing several inches over six feet and being enormously solid and broad in proportion, he was an object of admiration to the many black men who loafed along the Florida shore. With the Seminoles he had nothing whatever to do, for these Indians showed their distaste for negroes so plainly that it was with difficulty trouble was avoided whenever the men of the Glades came to town to trade their deerskins for ammunition. Bahama Bill stuck to his class until it was past the time for him to return to the light, and then started off, rigged out clean and shipshape in a small boat.

The old keeper of the Fowey Rocks lighthouse came out upon the gallery to take the morning air. The sun was shining and the warm wind from the Gulf Stream blew lazily through the doorway into the lantern-room. The blue sea sparkled in the sunshine, and the long, easy roll of the swell told of calm weather offshore. It was a perfect day, a day of peace and quiet, upon the end of the great Florida Reef, which

stretched away for miles to the southward. Eastward nothing rose above the blue rim which compassed all. To the northward the low line of hummocks showed where Virginia Key and Key Biscayne rose above the water some ten miles distant. To the westward the little lump of Soldier Key showed where there might be a solitary human within a dozen miles. And all about the blue sea sparkled in the bright light, taking on the varicoloured hues found above the coral banks. Near the lighthouse, in three feet of water, the coral showed distinctly even from the height of the tower. Old man Enau gazed down at it, watching the bright green tinge melt to deeper colour until, in three fathoms, the pure limpid blue of the great stream flowed past uncoloured and undefiled. Fish were swimming around the iron piles of the lighthouse; great big bonito, sinuous barracuda, and now and then a shark would drift up to the iron pillars and bask a moment in the shade of the tall structure which rose above the coral bank to the height of a hundred feet and more, standing like a huge long-legged spider upon its iron feet in the shallow water.

The quiet of the morning was oppressive to the keeper. Not a sound rose from the reef save the low roll of the sea as it broke upon the edge of the bank, not the cry of a single sea-bird to break the great stillness and beautiful quiet of the day. The old man had been in the light for three years. To him the world was that eternal sea bounded by the blue rim and spotted in one or two places by the distant Keys.



Whatever he had seen of human life he left behind him when he took the position as keeper. He had tried to forget. And now, as the years passed, his memories were fading. The human struggle was over. The thought of what he had seen and done was dimmed in the glare of the tropic sunshine, and the shadow of his past had faded to nothing.

He had a fine old face. Rugged and burned from the weather on the reef, his features still bore traces of culture. His nose was straight and small, and his eyes were bright and blue, the deep blue of the surrounding sea, which had kept him apart from his fellow men so long.

He leaned out over the rail and looked down. The heat and stillness oppressed him, and as he gazed below at the white and green formations he seemed to see again the inside of a court-room. The quiet and heat were there, and the stillness was strained and intense, as he waited for the word which meant his ruin. The faces of the jury who were trying a murder case were before him, the man on the right looking hard at him, and the foreman bowing his head gravely in that moment of utter silence before he spoke the words which meant his end. It had been a peculiar case, a case of great brutality and cruelty, apparently, from the evidence produced. He, the master of a large square-rigged ship, had been accused of a horrible crime, and the evidence of two witnesses was there to prove it. He remembered the man whose evidence was the strongest against him, a sailor whom

he had befriended, and he could see the look of pious resignation upon the fellow's face. He also remembered the furtive gleam that came now and again from the corner of his eye as he sat near the witness-box and waited his turn to tell of the horror.

Why was it? Was it the heat that brought back those scenes which were fading, or was it the ominous silence of the torrid sunshine upon the reef? The lines in the face of the old man grew rigid and drawn, and he gazed stolidly into the blue water until the coral banks took on new shapes. He saw a ship's deck with the long plank strakes stretching hundreds of feet fore and aft; the low white deck-house, with the galley smoke-pipe stretching across it and the boats upon the strong-backs or booms atop of it; the solid coamings of the hatchways, with the battened hatches as strong as the sides of the vessel itself; the high topgallant-rail which shut off the view to windward, and the rows of belaying-pins stuck beneath with the neatly coiled braces upon them; the high head of the topgallant-forecastle and the long jibboom pointing out over the sea; and, above all, the long, tapering spars lifting upward into the blue above, with the white canvas bellying in the breath of the trade-wind. It was all plain before him again. Then it changed — the pampero off the River Plate, the great hurricane sea which swept the ship and smashed her up, leaving her a wreck, leaking and settling, six hundred miles from shore. The fracas was there before him — the men struggling, trying to save her, until,

tired out with exertion and suffering, the man with the furtive eyes had refused to do duty and managed to get the rest to back him.

Then the days following, full of desperate endeavour: the fellow who refused duty shirking and endangering the lives of all; the measures he took, hanging the man by the hands and flogging him until he fell in a faint; how he staggered to his feet and looked at the master — one long look full of a purpose implacable, unrelenting, and then the quiet manner he had when he obeyed. He had picked the fellow up starving upon the streets, an outcast from some country and of a social sphere above his own, taking him aboard his ship and providing food and clothing with a fair wage — and this had been the outcome.

They had left her in the one remaining boat two days after, crowding the craft almost to the gunwales; but the sea was now smooth and the wind gone, leaving a quiet strangely like that of the beautiful day about him. The row westward over that oily, heaving ocean, day after day, day after day!

One by one they had dropped off, overboard, to float astern, and all the time the *rip, rip, rip* of a triangular fin above a great shadow below the surface.

He had done what he could, taking no more of the meagre food than the rest. Then the last days — four of them left, the men who witnessed against him and another, a stout fellow who had kept up better than the rest. How he had discovered that the fellow had stolen the scant store of food steadily and divided

it with the man he had flogged. How, when they had taken all, they had set upon him, and he had killed the stout thief and wounded the other. There was nothing left to eat, — absolutely nothing for five days, — and they had — ugh! — it was too horrible; and upon the seventh day they had been picked up with the evidences of the horror too plain for their rescuers to make a mistake in the matter, even without the two men, who openly accused him of the whole wrong — accused him of not only killing his men, but — ugh!

The trial had lasted a week and the evidence was most horrible. The jury had convicted him upon that of the fellow who sat there with a pious look and furtive glance; the other fellow had merely corroborated his story, and, as it was two against him, his own tale was not believed. He had received a life sentence for the crime, for he had admitted killing the stout man who had stolen the last of the food. He explained that it was his duty as captain to protect his life from their combined assault. The jury had not believed him, for the man who was against him was ready to show the falsity of his tale; he had been sentenced for life. He had served seven years and had escaped by cutting the bars of his cell and gaining a vessel which was wrecked on the coast of Africa, letting him get ashore unmolested. After drifting about for a time he had come back to America and taken the position as keeper in the tower, where his past was

not open to inspection, for no one knew him or whence he came.

The sunshine was as quiet as before, but the blue Gulf Stream showed a darkening far away on the horizon, where a breeze ruffled the surface. He turned and gazed over the sea toward Florida, and a tiny black speck showed upon the waters of the reef. It looked like a small boat coming out through the Hawk's Channel, and he looked at it steadily for a long time, trying to see if it might be Haskins, the assistant keeper, returning.

The sunshine was very hot on this side of the tower, and it dazzled him for a little while as he gazed over the sparkling sea. The speck drew nearer, and he saw that it was a boat. It came very slowly, sailing with the light air, the bit of white canvas looking no larger than a handkerchief in the distance. Soon the figure of a man could be seen lying easily in the stern-sheets of the craft, and the old keeper saw that the man's legs were bare and brown. Then the tiny shallop took more definite form and showed to be a canoe, its occupant an Indian from the Everglades, coming out to fish upon the reef.

Indians seldom came so far away from land, and as the craft drew nearer and nearer Enau watched it carefully. The Seminoles were friendly. They were an unconquered tribe of Indians who had managed to evade all efforts made by the United States to subdue them. They had retired into the fastnesses of the great swamps, where no white soldier could pursue

with any hope to capture, and after years of peace had come to the coast again with the understanding that they should not be molested. The old man had heard of them from Haskins, the assistant, and he had once or twice seen canoes skirting the edge of the great bay in the distance, but he had never seen an Indian close enough to recognize him. The canoe had now come within half a mile of the tower, and was still heading straight for it.

The breeze died away again and the sun shone straight down with an intense heat. The tower cast no shadow either to east or west, and the ship's clock in the kitchen struck off eight bells. Enau mopped his streaming forehead and was about to turn into the galley to get a drink of water. The heat made him reel with dizziness, but the man in the boat made a movement, and he held his gaze fixed upon him. The canoe was coming close to the tower, and it was evident that the Indian would land there if the keeper allowed him. There was no way of getting up to the light except by way of the long iron ladder which reached from the gallery to the sea, a hundred feet below. It was an easy path to dispute with any number of men, especially as they must come through the heavy trap-door in the gallery at the top. There was no way of getting up over the outside, unless one could climb the long, smooth iron rods for a great distance and then reach out under the sill to get a hand-grip upon the edge of the floor and swing out over the gulf below. It would be a mere finger-grip

at most, and a tap upon the bare knuckles would send the fellow to his death below. A good sailor might climb the smooth iron rods with great difficulty, but no one could climb up a hundred feet and swing out on that finger-tip hold with the hope of climbing to the rail above. The trap-door worked with a five-hundred pound weight, and if any one tried to come up the thin iron ladder the keeper could simply lower the door and the stout three-inch planks would drop easily into place at will. Enau studied it all out while he gazed below, and it amused him to think what a surprised Indian it would be when he climbed up there to find the door drop fast in his face. No; the keeper was as much his own master in regard to human visitors as though he were a resident of some other planet. A thousand men could not approach him if he did not wish it. He could be all alone for an indefinite time, for he had provisions for half a year and water enough for a lifetime.

While he gazed at the approaching boat the man in her looked up. It was but a glance, a mere look at the head upon the rail above. Enau gasped. That one glance upward was enough for him. The fellow was not an Indian, after all. The sun-tanned face, burned to a dark mahogany colour, belonged to one he had not forgotten. That glance, furtive, half-shrinking, animal-like, without the movement of a single feature, belonged to — yes, there was no mistake. It was Robledo, the sailor who had witnessed

against him, the survivor of the horror, the man who had compassed his ruin.

Enau drew his breath quickly and stood up straight. The place seemed to swing about in the sunshine, the tower to rock like a ship in a seaway. Then he peered over again just as the craft came alongside one of the iron pillars. He did not show his face, — just his eyes, — for fear the fellow might recognize him and not come up the ladder. He would have the trap-door ready for him, for it would never do to let that human devil know he was upon the light. Yes; perhaps he would let him come up, inside the gallery, but never go back. The sea would tell no tales. There would be no marks of a struggle, no evidence of a fight — a quick crack upon the head, and over the side, down a hundred feet to the waters of the reef, where the sharks lay waiting. That would be all. He could do it easily. But, then, the fellow might be missed, after all. Some one might know he had gone out to the light, and then there would be the investigation. That was what he did not want. There must be no inquiries, no questions asked him about his past. He was an old man now, and the memory of his terrible wrongs was fading. Let them die out. He would let the enemy go as he came. The fellow could not know he was in the tower, and there was no possibility of his recognizing him, as he had not shown his whole face over the rail. Even if he had, the hair and the beard of three years' growth would hide anything of Captain William Jacobs that still existed in him.



No; he would let no one come up that ladder. He would live the rest of his life in peace and quiet. He loved the bright sunshine and the beautiful sea, and he could be satisfied where he was. His wife and daughter he had long given up. They had bade him farewell at the end of that trial, holding away from him, yet with tears streaming down their faces in the agony and horror of it all. He must be alone. There must be no one to tell him about them.

He looked down again, and saw the man below drawing on his trousers preparatory to climbing the ladder. Enau could see into the bottom of the boat beneath, and he noticed a harpoon used for spearing crawfish. Would the fellow take it with him? If so, it would be well not to let him come too near, for it could be thrown and might be dangerous. The man gave no hail, but turned his smooth-shaved face upward and began to mount the ladder. Enau went to the trap-door and loosed the weight softly. It creaked upon its hinges and settled slowly down until only a crack remained. Here he stopped it, with the bolts in readiness to shoot if necessary. He would watch the fellow and see if he showed signs of recognition. Ten years was a long time; the end of the Florida Reef was many thousand miles from where he had last seen him.

The man climbed slowly up the iron ladder, stopping now and then to look seaward. The current had swept his canoe to the northward of the lighthouse, where it trailed at the end of a long line. There was

now nothing under him but the blue water. When he reached the first platform he climbed on to it and rested. It was very hot, and the climb made his mahogany-coloured face darker than before. His hair was freshly parted, and looked as though it had been oiled or moistened. His coat he had left in his boat below, and his shirt was open at the neck, showing the strong, corded muscles of his throat and chest. His hands were brown and powerful, and the keeper noticed how his fingers closed with a light but certain grip upon the irons of the ladder.

In a moment he came on again, and when within a few feet of the door he looked upward and hailed. At that instant the old man closed the door and shot the bolts. He was now cut off as completely as though he had gone to the moon. The heat and excitement made his head whirl. He staggered away from the closed door and went back to the gallery. The sunshine danced upon the sea and all was quiet. Then he peered over the rail. A string of muttered curses floated up to him and a drunken voice called him many foul names, but he only smiled and stood gazing out to sea. He could not see the man below now, for the fellow was too high up under the platform, and he made his way to the kitchen and from there higher up into the lantern, where the man's voice could not be heard distinctly.

Hours passed, and the sunshine began to slant sharply. The tower cast a long shadow to the eastward, but the canoe was still swinging to her painter,

and the voice of the fellow below was still heard calling forth curses upon him. The keeper was evidently not recognized, for he heard the name "Enau" repeated over and over again, and this was his name as lightkeeper — Robert Enau, head keeper of the Fowey Rocks lighthouse. If the fellow had recognized him he would have called him Jacobs, and then he would have tried to kill him. It grew dark, but he forgot to light his lantern, his whole mind taken with the one thought of how to get rid of his visitor. If the lantern was not lighted, the fellow might think that there was no one in the tower, after all, and would go away. The idea flashed through his brain for an instant, and then he centred his thoughts again on the fellow below and forgot the darkness and quiet of the tropic night. Suddenly he thought of the fellow's boat. If he could endanger it, the man might leave. He seized a heavy piece of iron and dropped it at the dark shadow floating at the end of the line. A dull crash told of the accuracy of his aim. Then the shadow faded out, and he knew the boat had sunk. There was no sound from the man upon the ladder below. Evidently he had gone down to the first landing and gone to sleep or was waiting, not knowing the damage done his craft. He could now neither go away nor come up, and the idea worried the keeper greatly. He was very dizzy with the heat and excitement, and his thoughts went again and again over the scenes of that last voyage and the trial following. In the gray of the early morning he was still sitting in

the lantern, gazing out to sea, waiting for the sun to rise and show him his enemy below. The day dawned beautiful and clear, and the quiet heat continued. In a little while a noise upon the ladder attracted the old man's attention. He listened. What was the fellow saying?

"For God's sake let me up!"

Not he. No! Had the fellow shown him any mercy when he was at the end of his liberty? Why should he show him any now? All he wanted was for him to go away and let him be. He did not want to see the man. Go away!

The pitiless sunshine streamed through the iron piling and upon the man. His boat was gone. It had sunk during the night from the weight Enau had thrown into it, and the current had torn it loose. There was no way for the man to get off the light without swimming. He must stay or die. He might cling for a long time to the iron ladder and rest upon the landing, but he could not swim ten miles in that current with sharks abounding.

The day passed slowly, and the man upon the ladder raved and swore, begged and cajoled, but Enau was silent and implacable. He went back into the lantern, taking some bread with him. He was not hungry, but the heat made his head swim, and he must eat something. The day drew to a close and silence reigned below. The man had given up talking. Enau lay prone upon his stomach and peeped over the edge of the platform. He could see the man crouching upon

the landing, lashed fast, to keep from falling, by a line made of his clothes. Darkness came and the heat abated a little, but no wind ruffled the surface of the Gulf Stream.

With a heavy bar in his hand the keeper sat and waited for any signs of fingers showing upon the edge of the platform. He would not let the fellow up — no, not for anything. If he died there, it was not his fault. He did not want him to come out to the light. He would not have him know that he, Captain Jacobs, was keeper.

The lantern remained unlighted. Now Enau was afraid to leave the platform an instant, for fear the fellow, desperate from his position, would climb over and kill him. He sat there during the hours of darkness and waited.

About three in the morning Enau saw two eyes staring at him. They were far away in the Hawk's Channel, but as the moments flew by they drew nearer. Soon a great shadow loomed up through the night, coming straight for the lighthouse. Then there was a sudden crash close aboard, the rattle and banging of ship's gear, followed by hoarse cries and curses. Enau went inside to the trap-door in the gallery, and sat there watching the bolts until daylight.

In the early morning there was a great noise below. Men shouted and called him by name, but he refused to answer. He peered over the edge of the platform, and he no sooner had done so than a perfect storm of voices greeted him. Two ship's boats were tied

to the piling of the tower, and many men were crowding up the ladder. More were upon the deck of the vessel, which had rammed her nose high and dry upon the reef close to the light. They were coming to take possession of the tower by force, and he saw that he must now be interviewed, perhaps taken away bodily, for the fellow on the ladder had joined the rest, and they were calling to him to open that door.

The day passed without a disturbance. The men of the four-masted schooner upon the reef spent their time rigging gear to heave the vessel off, and the man had joined them. At dark Enau, seeing that no one was upon the ironwork, lighted the lantern and then came back to his post at the trap-door, holding his club in readiness to prevent any trespassing. He sat there hour after hour, but there was no sign of an attack from below.

About midnight there was a slight noise upon the platform of the gallery near the rail. The old man noticed it, but waited. Then some one rapped sharply upon the door at his feet, and he stood ready for the attack. Then all was quiet as before.

The heat was intense inside the gallery, and Enau mopped his forehead again and again. The whole lighthouse seemed to stagger, and the room went round and round. He was dizzy and failed to see the fingers which grasped the edge of the outside platform, or the form that swung out over the gulf below. A man drew himself up until his head was level with the floor. Then he put one foot up on the landing.

He could not get back. It was a sheer hundred feet and over to the sea below, and the water was only three or four feet deep over the coral. He must gain the platform or go down to his death. Gradually he drew his weight upon the landing, clutching the rail with powerful fingers. Then he quickly stood upright and sprang over. He was in the light.

Enau saw him instantly and sprang at him. It was the same hated face, the furtive eyes he had reason to hate with all his soul. They clinched, and then began a struggle for life. And while they struggled the old man's mind could no longer hold his pent-up despair. He called out upon the scoundrel who had ruined him:

"You villain! you have pursued me for revenge — I'll give you all you want," he cried. "I know you; don't think I'll let you go." And, snarling like a wild beast, he strove with enormous power to crush the other against the rail, and so over into the sea. But the younger man was powerful. His strong fingers clutched at the old keeper's throat and closed upon it.

"I know you — I know you — I know your look — you pious-faced scoundrel!" gasped the old man. Then they fought on in silence. Suddenly those below heard a heavy fall. There was a moment's pause.

The room seemed to reel about the old keeper. He struggled wildly in that frightful grip. His breath came in bits of gasps and finally stopped under the awful pressure of those fingers. The scenes of his earlier life flitted through his mind. He saw the life-

boat again riding the oily sea in the South Atlantic; the starving men, their strained faces pinched and lined, their eager eyes staring about the eternal horizon for a sight of a sail; the last few days and the last survivors, the man with that look he would never forget — stars shot through his brain and fire flared before his vision. Then came blackness — a blank.

Those below, hearing the sounds of struggle dying away, called loudly to be let in. The man released his hold of the keeper's throat and shot back the bolts in the trap-door, letting a crowd of seamen come streaming into the light.

"Get some water, quick!" called Haskins, standing back and panting after the struggle. He was nearly exhausted, but still kept his gaze fixed upon the fallen old man.

"It's a touch of the sun," said the captain of the wrecked vessel, bending over the old keeper. "We must get him cooled off and ice to his head. Quick, John! jump aboard and tell the doctor to get a lump of ice and bring it here — git!"

"It's pretty bad; I've shuah been hanging on to the irons for two days, and you lose your ship, on account of a poor devil giving way under that sun; but it can't be helped. No, suh, it can't be helped," said Bahama Bill.

"If you hadn't shaved, fixed up and changed yourself so, and had come back in your own boat, he might have recognized you in time," said the captain; "but of course you didn't know."



**“ I think I done all I could sah,” said Bill, thinking of his climb over that outer rail.**

**“ Yes, yes; I don’t mean to find fault,” said the captain; “ but I lose my ship by it.”**

## VI

### The Sanctified Man

WHEN Mr. Leonard Holbrook bought the fine yawl *Dartmoor*, he did so with the clear understanding that his wife would accompany him on a voyage through the inland waters of the eastern coast of the States to Florida. The vessel was something over sixty feet on the water-line and fitted up with as much magnificence as a small craft of that size could well be. She had many trophies in solid silver, won in many hard-fought races, which adorned her cabin, and when Mrs. Holbrook beheld her interior she capitulated.

Mrs. Holbrook belonged to what was termed an "exclusive set." She went to church more than once a week, and the pastor of the million-dollar edifice in New York had much to thank her for.

"A poor person might be pious, but — ugh," he explained with a shrug to the sexton one evening, and he made it his duty to keep alive the fires of reverence which had been installed at an early age within Mrs. Holbrook's gentle breast.

It was with many misgivings that she finally became willing to trust herself upon the *Dartmoor*, for al-

though she had faith in abundance, it was of the usual feminine variety which is best nurtured under pleasantly artificial conditions. The dangers of the sea, however, were shown to be very small indeed upon a fine craft, especially within the confines of the sounds, and she had sailed as far down the coast as Beaufort. Here it was decided to remain for a few days and enjoy the rural life of the tar-heel, and while Holbrook fished and hunted every minute of the too short days, Mrs. Holbrook passed the time aboard in pious and profound repose. It was delightful to be able to read the texts under the bright blue sky while sitting alone upon the quarter-deck without being interrupted by talk of guns and fishing lines. Then the small but cleanly kirk upon the shell-road could be visited daily, and the good old man who attended to the religious affairs of the fishing village was more than willing to be honoured by so distinguished a visitor. Yachts were like manna, only they did not drop from the sky, but were not the less appreciated for that fact.

The fourth morning the *Dartmoor* broke out her blue pennant on the starboard spreader, showing that Holbrook had gone away for a day's sport. John Bunyan came down to the dock and stepped aboard. Jubiter John he was called among the pilots of the Core Bank, for he had lived at the inlet just above the beginning of the Florida Reef. He sidled aft and met the quartermaster, who stopped him, but as he was known as a good pilot and had brought the vessel in behind the "bulkhead" safely, he was allowed

certain privileges. The master came forth to meet him.

"Mornin', Cap'n," said John, slouching up and pulling forth a rank mullet roe from his pocket and nibbling the end.

The master acknowledged the salutation with a grunt.

"Youse don't take no passengers on a yacht, hey?" he ventured.

"No," said the skipper, decisively, with the vision of the possible passenger before him.

"Youse ain't allowed to, hey?"

"Exactly," said the Captain.

"It's too bad!" exclaimed John.

"Yes, it is," answered the Captain, heartily, his face expressing nothing of the sorrow he might have felt at the limitations of his license.

There was a moment's silence during which the Captain looked aft at the reclining form of Mrs. Holbrook. She sat reading in the shade of the after awning with a rug over her feet to keep off the chill of the autumn air.

"Did youse ever hear of the sanctified people?" asked Jubiter John, presently.

The Captain had not.

"Well, they live down near the Jubiter Inlet where I used to run. There's one o' the fellers ashore here now an' he wants to go back home. It would be a mighty big accommodation if youse could take him

with youse — don't youse think it could be done, hey? He'd pay a little."

"How much?" asked the Captain, slightly interested.

"Well, I can't say in money, but then his services air wuth somethin'. He's an all round able man, an' he'll say the prayers fer yer."

"I see," said the Captain, with a grunt.

"There's nothin' doin'?"

"Nix," said the Captain, shortly.

"Well, naow, that's too bad. But think it over, Cap'n, think it over."

The skipper edged to the rail and sniffed suspiciously.

"If it's just the same to you, Jubiter, I'll thank ye to get to lor'ard with that mullet roe. Whew!" said the Captain.

Jubiter John looked pained. He put the rest of the fish roe into his pocket and turned to go. At that instant the Captain started and looked up the dock. A huge figure of a man hove in sight and came slowly down the shell fill towards the yawl.

The figure was dressed in black cloth of clerical cut, the broad shoulders squared across and the hands folded behind. The stranger's head was not visible owing to the fact that he bowed it over until nothing but the top of a shiny tall hat showed in front of him, and he looked almost like a huge turtle with his head drawn inside the shell. The black tails of his coat

flapped about his legs in the sea breeze as he strode slowly down to where the *Dartmoor* lay.

Mrs. Holbrook noticed the man about the time the Captain started up the gangplank to intercept him coming aboard. Visitors were not always welcome to the skipper of the yacht, and it was his duty to see what they wanted. The Captain had hardly started well up the narrow way, when the stranger, who had reached the inshore end of it and was about to proceed down its length, suddenly raised his head. The motion was not unlike that of a turtle poking forth his nose, for it increased the man's stature a full foot, and he stopped, looking at the Captain out of eyes that seemed to hold both a challenge and a half-hidden fear. His shaved chin had a stubble of black hair, but it failed to cover the great square jaw except in spots. A line of white teeth showed between the partly opened lips, and the Captain hesitated to take in the man's appearance more fully before ordering him off the boat. The vessel gave a tug at her moorings and the gangplank took a sudden slue to one side. The next instant the Captain gave a spring for the string piece of the wharf. He missed it by a fraction of an inch and fell heavily against the timber and overboard, landing in the water with a rousing splash.

The accident caused a cry of alarm from Mrs. Holbrook which brought from the depths of the cabin her son Richard. He came bounding up the companion-way as rapidly as a boy of twelve could. Jubiter John stood spellbound, looking over the side while the boy,

the cook and a sailor rushed to the rail to lend a hand and get the skipper back aboard.

The tall stranger, however, had anticipated their arrival by a few seconds and, jumping on deck, leaned over the side and reached a long thin arm down to the Captain, who came spluttering to the surface. He seized the collar of the coat as it came clear of the water and without apparent effort raised the Captain to the deck. The motion was one of such ease, the Captain being a short, heavy fellow, that a close observer would have marvelled at the man's strength, but in the excitement little notice was taken of it. The stranger had saved the Captain from the sea, and Mrs. Holbrook, who had now advanced to the rail, thanked him warmly for his services.

The look of challenge died away from the man's eyes and one of fear came in place. He shuffled uneasily under the woman's gaze, but finally controlled himself. Then without a word he lifted his face heavenward and clasped his hands before him.

"The ways o' Providence air unbeknownst," said he, slowly, closing his upturned eyes and standing like some huge statue carved in wood. His voice was so soft and gentle that it brought a smile to the face of the boy who stared at him insolently. But the rest were impressed by the man's manner and stood silently watching him until he brought his head back to its normal position with a jerk. Then the Captain muttered something about inquisitive strangers and went below to change, for the air was cool.

"I am sure I should like to repay you for your bravery, Mr. — Mr. ——" began Mrs. Holbrook, "but I hardly know how to thank you, sir."

"Mr. Jones is his name, ma'am," said Jubiter John, "an' youse kin repay him at once."

Mr. Jones looked somewhat abashed at this, and the stranger's look of defiance came into his eyes again.

"He's the sanctified man I ware tellin' the Cap'n of jest before he fell overboard," went on Jubiter, "an' all he wants is a passage down the coast a ways. The settlement is down near where I used to run."

"Ah, a clergyman, — a country clergyman, I see," said Mrs. Holbrook.

"I reckon that's about it," said Jubiter John.

"Mr. Jones," said Mrs. Holbrook, "I should be very glad, indeed, to aid you down the coast. You know the yacht is small and you might have to sleep in the Captain's stateroom. If you would not object to that arrangement, you are more than welcome to the voyage."

"Ah, madam," said the tall man, solemnly, in a small voice hardly above a whisper, "I should be glad to have the opportunities you speak of, and if the bed be rough an' hard an' the grub poor, I know it will be the hand o' Providence what makes it so, an' I kin stand it. The ways o' Providence air unbeknownst."

"Very well, then, we leave to-morrow morning at daylight. My husband will be back before sundown and you may come aboard to-night," said Mrs. Hol-



brook. "Won't you come aft? I am sure the walk must have tired you. It is a long way to the village."

The tall Mr. Jones glanced at Jubiter John and then followed the lady to the quarter-deck, where he folded up like a huge jack-knife in a deck chair, to listen to the somewhat vague but religious conversation of his new patron. He sat there for a full hour, seldom even answering questions which were put to him and not offering a single sentence of his own volition. When he arose to go, he looked askance at Mrs. Holbrook, then he raised his face heavenward and said, solemnly: "The ways o' Providence air unbeknownst."

He turned in a moment and went rapidly to the rail near the dock, leaving Mrs. Holbrook staring at him.

"Ain't he a long one, say," said young Richard, "an' them legs — Gee whizz!"

But at that instant the tall man sprang to the wharf and hurried off, hearing nothing, and Richard received a severe rebuke.

"My dear," said Mrs. Holbrook to her husband that evening, "I have taken the liberty of inviting a country clergyman to accompany us down the coast. He will be here this evening and I hope you will be civil to him."

"Huh," said Mr. Holbrook, and went on deck to smoke his cigar.

"Is he really comin' to go with us?" asked Richard.

"Yes, my dear, of course he is," answered his mother.

"But ain't he long, say?" and he bounded up the companionway to join his father.

Before eight bells that evening the tall Mr. Jones made his appearance and introduced himself to the Captain. As the latter had been instructed to entertain the new arrival to the extent of giving up his room, he received the tall man with scant ceremony.

"What's the matter wid payin' yer passage on a steamboat?" growled the mariner, as he jerked his belongings out of the berth.

"My friend," observed the sanctified man, "it is not my wish to cause trouble, an' I can't help it. If your bed be hard I make no complaint; I'll try to sleep on it. If my grub is no good, I'll try to forget it. The way o' Providence air unbeknownst."

The short, stout skipper stood looking at him a moment, but the sanctified man beamed down upon him until he turned with an exclamation of a somewhat unconventional sort and left the room. Then the tall man closed the door.

In the early morning the *Dartmoor* was cast loose from the dock and her mainsail hoisted. Jubiter John stood near the wheel and piloted her safely over the bar and out into the green waters of the Atlantic. Then he left her and took to his dory to row back.

The air was crisp with the tingle of a nor'wester and the sun rose with a ruddy glow. The sea was smooth under the land, but the little lumpy clouds

which were running away from the northward, told of wind behind. Before the sun was well above the horizon, Mr. Jones appeared on deck. He was dressed in his black trousers with suspenders tied about his waist in place of a belt. His once white shirt was open at the neck displaying a deep and brawny chest. Two long white feet poked themselves from beneath his trouser legs in most unpoetical fashion, but showed he was ready for the washing down of the vessel's decks. He tailed on to the gaff-topsail halliards and sweated up that piece of canvas until the block nearly parted from the masthead with the strain. Even the Captain, who had spent the night sleeping upon the galley floor, felt that he had, indeed, an able seaman in the sanctified man who hurled buckets of water along the snow-white planks or hustled the squeegee along the deck until the wood and seams fairly oozed water like a sponge. The three foremast hands hurried along in his wake.

The *Dartmoor* was fast making an offing. With all sail she was running before the breeze which now began to get a heart in it, and the long heave of the heavy sea coming around Cape Lookout told of something behind it. There was a live kick and quick run to this swell that made the skipper look anxiously to his lighter canvas, but it was his object to get as far down the beach as possible while the wind lasted. A few miserable hours of heavy weather and all might be well, but thrashing down a nor'wester would cost him his job if he judged Mrs. Holbrook correctly.

The motion brought young Richard on deck, where he stood looking at the tall man in amazement.

"I thought you was a minister, say?" he ventured, as the sanctified man came near with the squeegee, "an' ministers don't work."

"Well, some kinds do, sonny. I ain't just what you might call a priest."

"Naw, you look like you might be some good," said the boy. "But ain't you a long one, say? When you get through I'll come forward and talk to you. Ma won't care; she says she hates to have to sit around an' try to talk to people she don't know nothin' about."

"Did she say that?"

"Sure, she don't know nothin' about you."

The look of fear came into the tall man's eyes and he squeegeed the deck vigorously. Then he went slowly forward and put the tool away.

One of the sailors struck off six bells and the cook announced that breakfast was ready for the Captain and the guest. As the saloon was for the owner and his party, the meal was served in the galley, the Captain and sanctified man sitting at the small table used to manipulate the several ingredients which went to make a yacht's meal.

"Do you think we'll have good weather, Captain?" asked the tall man, starting in at a plate of prepared oats.

"Naw," snapped the skipper, who still held vision of his night's rest upon the galley floor.

"D'ye mind me sayin' a thank ye fer the vittles, hey?"

"Do yer prayin' to yerself," snapped the Captain.

The long man raised his eyes and muttered something in his soft voice.

"No matter if the vittles is bad — an' poor, I'm thankful. The ways o' Providence air unbeknownst," he said as he finished.

"What's the matter with the whack?" snarled the Captain. "Ain't it good enough fer yer? I'll lay it's a sight better'n you been used to gettin', an' that's a fact."

"I didn't say it wasn't good," said the tall man, hastily, in a gentle tone. "I only said I was thankful even if it wasn't any good."

"Huh," snarled the Captain, "tryin' to sneak out of it, hey?"

"A sanctified man never fights," said the big fellow in a small voice, "for if he did I would break you up in little pieces."

"Well, a sailor fights an' don't you fergit it," snarled the Captain. "You want to try the breakin' game a bit aboard here, you long-legged sky-pilot. What the thunder d'ye call a sanctified man anyways, hey?"

"Don't ye know?" asked the tall man, mildly, his eyes taking again that peculiar look of fear they often held.

"Naw," answered the skipper.

"Well, he's one what's been tried. A man that's

been off the path an' come back again. He's taken the oath to do no more harm — nothin' but good. He's sanctified."

"No more harm! What harm hev ye done, hey?" asked the Captain, sharply.

"Well, I served my time out — all but three years," said the tall man, fearfully.

"What?" gasped the skipper.

"I served my time out, nearly out. It was only fifteen years I got. I'm all right and have papers to prove it. One of the men they thought I killed got well again. The money was divided among my pals. I didn't get a cent of it; no, not a cent. But the past is past. Let it die!"

"An' you calls yourself a sanctified man, you bloomin' convict, hey? Steward, set these things somewhere else. I may not be particular as to friends aboard ship, but I draw the line at eatin' with jail-birds."

"I never was in jail — only for a month. It was the penitentiary," corrected the tall man, his small voice almost dying away. There was something very sad in his tone; something so touching that even the steward hesitated at obeying the skipper's orders.

"An' to think," said the Captain, "that Jubiter John should play it so badly on us."

He ate his meal in silence on the other side of the little room, while the vessel plunged and ran down the slopes of following seas, creaking and straining so that he soon left for the deck.

The sanctified man sat eating slowly, in spite of the motion and cries from above, as the men shortened sail to ease the racing craft in the sea. He was lost in thought. The memories of his sufferings were upon him, and as the sad years rolled back, he seemed to stand again upon a ship's deck giving orders to a crew who obeyed as only deep-water men know how. His had been a long, hard road, indeed. The surly Captain was forgotten and his insults were as though they had never been uttered.

While he sat there eating slowly and thinking over the past, he became aware that the door leading to the main saloon was open. Through it he caught a glimpse of shining silver as the *Dartmoor* rolled heavily to starboard, letting in a flood of sunlight through her side ports. A huge urn or cup weighing many pounds, and of solid silver, was firmly planted upon a shelf near the end of the saloon. Upon it was an engraving of a yacht under full sail with the legend "Dartmoor" with "1898" beneath. Evidently the trophy of that season and probably the greatest she had ever won. It was a superb piece of ware, and the man looked at it for a long time, while his face gradually took on a hard expression and the strange look of defiance and challenge came again into his eyes. He had suffered much, but there was something within him that was stirred by the glint of that silver. Twelve long years among a certain class of men had implanted new weaknesses and developed those he had

already possessed. He was forgetting himself under the flashing of that reflected sunlight.

Suddenly he was aware of a small hand stealing within his own and he turned with a cry of alarm. A look of despair came across his face and his wide jaws set firm.

"I didn't mean to scare you," said Richard, glancing backward at the steward who was busy with the morning meal. "You don't look like you scare easily. I heard what old square-head said to you. Don't you mind him. He'll eat with you — an' afterwards you can tell me what you done."

"Good God," murmured the man, and seized the boy in his arms.

"Don't hug me; I ain't no girl," cried Richard, and the tall man sat him on his knee and smilingly patted his head.

"I reckon we'll go on deck," said the sanctified man, in a few minutes. "They'll want some help reefin' the mainsail — pretty big sea to run her under all lower canvas." And he took the lad's hand and went forward through the forecastle to the scuttle and so on up to the sunlight above.

The morning was now well advanced. Eight bells struck off, and the head of Mr. Holbrook appeared emerging from the cabin companionway. The sea was sparkling in the sunshine and the quick combers running before the freshening breeze were covering the surface with patches of white. The topsail had



been taken in and all hands were lowering down the mainsail to close reef it.

The sanctified man tailed on to the main sheet and soon had the boom nearly amidships. Then the sail was lowered slowly, the men handing in the canvas to ease it on the lazyjacks and toppinglift while the *Dartmoor* ran along under jigger and jib before a sea that was rapidly shifting to the eastward. Mr. Holbrook came on deck and watched his flying fabric, taking a hand and passing reef-points under the jackstay along the boom, which were all carefully pulled out again and passed under the foot-roping of the mainsail by the careful skipper.

Mrs. Holbrook decided that as the motion was very great she would remain where it affected her the least. It would be time enough to go on deck after dinner, when the beauties of an afternoon at sea might be appreciated.

Mr. Holbrook soon went below to breakfast and took his son with him. When they appeared again the mainsail was set close-reefed, and the jigger rolled up, letting the yawl run easily with more headsail. She now rose on the following seas like a swan, and as she would reach the crest she would rush wildly along the slanting side, her nose pointing downward and the full weight of the gale in her canvas, until the sea would run from under her, letting her sink slowly into the trough where her canvas would flap in the almost calm spot between the seas. It was a little thick to the westward, but although the land

could not now be seen there was a good stretch of water plainly visible.

The sanctified man stood near the wheel, looking occasionally into the binnacle where the compass card swung a good three points each side of the lubber's mark, as the vessel broached or paid off in the sea.

"D'ye ever adjust that compass?" he asked, mildly, of Mr. Holbrook.

"Ever what?" asked the owner, contemptuously.

"Do you ever see that the card swings true?" asked the sanctified man.

Mr. Holbrook looked at the tall man with undisguised pity. What should a clerical man know about navigation, he thought. The poor country clergyman was evidently a bit ignorant concerning compasses, although every schoolboy knew that the magnet swung north and south. He attempted to explain the matter in a wearied tone, but when he had finished the tall man only smiled and his expressive eyes showed traces of amusement. He said nothing. Finally he ventured:

"If I were you, I would let her head a little more to the eastward."

Mr. Holbrook walked away giving a little grunt of disgust as though he had been holding intercourse with a lunatic. As he never spoke to his Captain except to tell him where he wanted to go, he had a rather lonely time on deck and took to playing with his son by sitting at one end of the cabin-house and

throwing a line to him at the other and then pulling upon it.

The sea became rougher during the day, but in spite of it, dinner was served in the saloon. Mrs. Holbrook appeared at last and bravely tried to play the part of hostess to her guest. Holbrook had always shown an aversion to piously inclined people, and a clergyman's presence gave him extreme annoyance, as it prevented his picturesque flow of words. As adjectives were a weakness of his, the conversation would have lapsed into monosyllables, had not Mrs. Holbrook determined to do her duty.

"I suppose," said that lady, "you have many sailor men in your congregation, Mr. Jones."

The tall man looked at her sharply. He thought of his "congregation" and wondered. Did the lady know what he was? He had not meant to deceive any one. Jubiter John had simply asked for a passage for a sanctified man and had not thought it necessary to go into the man's history. His eyes held the strange look of alarm they had when he first came aboard, and he answered in his thin voice.

"Yes, ma'am, there's plenty of sailors get in, though they are no worse'n landsmen. It don't make much difference what callin' a man takes, there's bad ones in all."

Mrs. Holbrook glanced at her husband, who smiled his approval.

"Do you know Mr. Brown, the pastor in Beaufort?" asked the lady.

"He must be a very excellent man — I never heard of him," said her husband, with a touch of irony.

"I asked Mr. Jones," said Mrs. Holbrook, sweetly.

"No, ma'am, I never did," said the tall man, shooting his head upward and looking at his host. "He never did time."

"Never what?" asked the lady.

A sharp kick upon the shin bone from young Richard caused the sanctified man to raise a full foot higher in his seat.

"What's the matter?" he asked quickly.

"Aw, tumble," said the irreverent Richard.

Mrs. Holbrook looked at her son sharply.

"What did you do? Do you want to be sent from the table?" she said.

The young man dropped his gaze into his plate and looked abashed. His father smiled. The meal proceeded in silence until they had finished, when Mr. Holbrook led the way on deck with a handful of cigars.

"That wasn't a bad one on the country parson," ventured the yachtsman. "You fellows so seldom joke, a man never knows just when you will break out. Ha, ha, ha — 'never did time' — Well, that wasn't half bad." And he quite warmed to the tall man as he offered him a *perfecto*.

"But you see —"

"Yes, I see well enough. I don't blame you for kicking about such men. Now *you* can tail on to a sheet or pass a reef point like a *man*. Will you have

a good nip of grog before Mrs. Holbrook comes on deck?"

The sanctified man thought he would. They repaired to the forehatch, where the steward passed up the spirits unseen.

The warmth of the liquor put new life in the tall man's great frame. He had eaten very little for days and the effects of good food and strong drink were very strengthening. The look of challenge took the place of alarm in his large expressive eyes and his great square jaw seemed to set firmer. Half of his cigar disappeared between his teeth, which closed upon it with the set of a vise.

They went aft again in time to meet Mrs. Holbrook coming on deck assisted by the Captain, who placed rugs for her in a steamer chair in the cockpit. It was getting thicker and the wind was now well to the eastward of north, but there was no harbour nearer than Cape Fear, and the Captain had many reasons for not wishing to stop there. He would run along close to the land and after passing would be in Long Bay, where he would have a fair wind to Charleston, one hundred and fifty miles ahead, making a run of more than two hundred miles from Beaufort. This would get the yacht well down the coast to where they might expect good weather.

"I think," said the tall Mr. Jones, during a break in the conversation, "I would head the vessel offshore a couple of points. You know the Frying Pan runs well off here. It will be breaking in three fathoms

with this breeze. The ways o' Providence air un—— ”

“ Never mind about Providence, Mr. Jones,” said Holbrook, with a wave of his hand. “ The Captain will look out for the yacht. You needn't be scared. Tell us about the sailors you get in your flock. How you learned all about boats from them.”

Mr. Jones drew himself up a good foot. His head went up in the air and the look of defiance came into his eyes.

“ The only fellows that got sent up with me were Jack Elwell and Bill Haskins,” said he.

“ How do you mean sent up with you? ” asked Mrs. Holbrook.

“ Well, they were caught straight enough,” said the tall man, sadly.

“ You mean they had to be caught and sent to you for spiritual teaching? ” asked Mrs. Holbrook with a smile.

“ Well, er — not exactly,” said the tall man, in a voice which died away to a whisper.

“ Ha, ha, ha, a good one on you, Mr. Jones,” said Holbrook.

“ Well, you see,” went on the tall man, slowly, “ you don't seem to understand just what I am.” He looked at the Captain, who stood near at the wheel, but whose face was like a mahogany mask.

“ Why, you are a clergyman, are you not? ” asked Mrs. Holbrook.

“ A convict,” said Mr. Jones, slowly. “ I am

Stormalong Journegan, sailor, navigator, and was sent up for fifteen years. Bahama Bill an' me got out."

There was a long silence. Holbrook rose and went to the farther side of the yacht. Mrs. Holbrook sat a few moments and looked out to sea. Then she motioned to the steward, who was at the companionway, to take her wraps below, and she disappeared down the steps without a word.

Holbrook saw something forward and made his way toward the bow followed by his son, who turned to look back at the tall man.

"Serves her bloomin' well right fer turnin' me out," growled the Captain into the ear of the helmsman. "Next time she'll be a bit more careful about takin' passengers."

Mr. Jones, or Journegan, sat looking out over the sea. The veil of mist that hung over the land held many images for him. He saw how it was aboard. His year of reformation had taught him many things, and the lesson he was learning was not entirely new. He gazed sadly at Holbrook. He had felt drawn toward the man, but after all, in spite of his assumed contempt for holy men, he was more of a hypocrite than the veriest village parson he had ever met.

He arose slowly, unkinking his long frame like the opening of a jack-knife. Then he tossed his cigar over the side and went to his room. He was an out-cast aboard that yacht and he knew it. The privacy of his room was much better than the inhospitality of the deck.

All the long afternoon he sat there thinking. He was not a strong man save for his great muscular frame. He had fallen before and he was now trying to do what he could to atone for it. The thought of the silver in the after-cabin came to him and his vacillating spirit could not quite get the glistening vision out of his brain, for after all, these people were his enemies. They could never be anything else as long as human vanity and conceit endured. Even the miserable little prig of an owner who ridiculed clergymen need not be spared. It might do his small soul good to have to part with some of his treasures. He pondered, while the light failed and the look of challenge came into his eyes. He had a powerful frame and had nothing to fear. And all the time the *Dartmoor* ran to leeward with the lift of the northeast sea behind her.

It was just before eight bells, when a man who had gone forward on lookout hailed the Captain.

"Something white dead ahead, sir," he cried.

The sanctified man heard and thought of the untrue compass. The next instant there was a dull reverberating snore alongside as a giant breaker burst into a white smother and rolled away in the darkness. It was breaking in three fathoms, and the yacht was racing to her end.

There was a rush of feet on deck. Wild cries came from aft, where the Captain had rolled the wheel hard down and was struggling with the sailor to get the jigger on her and force her offshore. She had not



touched yet, but as the yawl came to in the gale, she brought up broadside in a sea that burst upon her with the weight of an avalanche, heaving her on her lee beam and washing everything off her, fore and aft. The water poured down the companionway and flooded the cabin.

The sanctified man reached the deck by dint of a fierce struggle up through the forward companion. The men who were below followed as best they could; swashing, floundering through the flood and loosened fittings, and they managed to get aft in time to get a line to the sailor who had been at the wheel and who was now close alongside. The Captain was gone.

All the time the *Dartmoor* was drifting to leeward and into the breakers. She had swung off again under the pressure of her jib, and just as the tall man seized the jigger halliards to get the after sail upon her, she struck on the Frying Pan Shoals. The next sea rolled over her and was the beginning of the end.

Mr. Holbrook had been below all this time, and he now appeared at the companion with his wife and boy. The sea that fell over the wrecked craft nearly drowned them and washed Richard back into the cabin. Mr. Jones roared out for the men to get the only small boat left alongside, and his voice rose to a deep sonorous yell. He led the way himself to the falls, where the small boat trailed to leeward, the davits having been torn out bodily with the weight of the breaking seas. The hauling part was still on deck and he handed in the line quickly, the three sailors

and steward taking heart at his example and helping all they could. Mrs. Holbrook was placed in the small boat and her husband waited not for an invitation to follow, but floundered in after her. The three sailors sprang aboard. At that instant a giant sea rose to windward. It showed for a second in the ghastly phosphorescent glare of the surrounding foam. Then it thundered over the doomed yacht.

When the sanctified man came up from the blackness below, he was just aware of the vessel's outline some fifty feet away to windward, and he struck out strongly for her. In a few minutes he was alongside. A great sea broke over her again, but he held well under the rise of her bow and managed to cling to the trailing débris. Then he climbed on deck. There was nothing living left there. He looked for the boat, but it had disappeared. Then he was suddenly aware of a bright light and as he looked he remembered the Bald Head tower which marks the dreaded shoals of Cape Fear.

He knew he was a mile or more from the beach and all the way was the rolling surf. It was a desperate swim at any time, but in a northeast gale, with the sea rolling high, it was useless to think of anything human attempting it without artificial aid. He clung to the stump of the mainmast and tried to live through the torrents that swept over him by getting directly in its lee. This was the only way he could stay even a few moments aboard the vessel. She was lifting still with each succeeding sea and driving

higher and higher upon the bank, but she had not broken up badly yet. Yachts like the *Dartmoor* could stand a tremendous pounding before going to pieces, but he knew that nothing could stand the smashing long. Before daylight there would be not a stick to show that a fine ship had gone ashore in the night.

The cabin scuttle was open and he wondered if the cabin was full of water yet. The silver was still there and belonged to the man who could save it. There was a chance for him and he was already looking about in the blackness for a proper spar or piece of wood to float him for the struggle in. It might be just as well to try to take in a little extra weight along with him, for he would not start until he could get his float.

In a smooth between two seas he made a dash for the companion, springing along the coamings of the skylight to get a footing, for the deck was at a high angle. He reached it and clung under its lee for shelter. Then he peered down into the darkness below. The cabin was not quite full of water and he climbed down, feeling for the magnificent cup he had seen there the day before. His hand touched it, although he was now almost shoulder deep in the water. A mattress floated against him and he seized it. The cork within would float him and his prize. He tried to find something else that would float, but just then a torrent of sea water rushed below and he saw that if he would get away at all he must soon start. He lugged his prize to the steps and started to drag it

clear. He reached down in the water to get a better grip of it and his great fingers closed upon a human hand. Then he made out the form of the boy with his head still above water, clinging to the topmost step of the ladder. He peered into the child's face and saw the frightened eyes open and look at him. Then he stopped and stood motionless upon the ladder.

In all his work he had only been a few minutes, but those few minutes had been minutes of his old life, the life of a sailor. The late past had been forgotten and he was now a shipwrecked mariner, getting ashore as best he could, saving what he might from a wreck. But the touch of the boy's hand brought him back again to the realization of his condition. The hand of an enemy's son, but the hand of one who had treated him kindly. The mattress would not hold all three. It would be between the boy and the cup. He swore savagely at the piece of silver, held it for an instant, then started to hurl it from him. In the precious seconds he was making a desperate fight. He gripped it again with both hands and held it before him. A sea roared over the wreck and half smothered him, pouring down the open companion.

He dropped the heavy cup, seized the half-fainting Richard and quickly passed a lashing about him. Then he seized the cork mattress and boy and plunged to leeward.

In the dim gray of the early morning, the keeper of the Bald Head Lighthouse saw the tall form of a man staggering up the beach carrying something in

his arms. He ran down the steps of the tower and met the tall stranger and relieved him of his burden of a still living but half-drowned boy.

"His mother and father are crazy with grief," said the keeper. "The woman is crying all the time that it was the will o' God, because she had a convict aboard her yacht. If you are the Captain, you had better bring the lad to her yourself. I reckon she'll be careful what kind o' passengers she takes aboard again, and take your word for things aboard her boats."

"Does she think it was because a convict was aboard, the vessel went ashore?" asked the tall man, drawing his half-naked figure up to its full height.

"Sure, she says the Captain didn't want him. A mighty fine religious woman she is, too," said the keeper.

"I reckon I won't bother her just now," said the tall man, in a voice hardly above a whisper. "You take the little fellow to her — I'll go and get some clothes on."

The light-keeper strode away with the boy in his arms. The tall man stood still for several minutes, looking after him. When the keeper reached the dwelling he turned and saw the tall man still standing there in his soaking trousers, his giant torso looking like the statue of a sea-god. "The ways o' Providence air mighty strange," muttered the sanctified man, slowly to himself — "But somehow I feel that I won."

## VII

### When the Light Failed at Carysfort

THE United States Lighthouse Establishment, organized by Thornton Jenkins, Rear-Admiral, United States Navy, had built many important lighthouses upon the coast of the States. The appropriations admitted the lighting of the dangerous coral banks of the Florida Reef, which rose from the blue Gulf Stream many miles offshore and stretched away from Cape Florida to Tortugas.

From Fowey Rocks to Sand Key the high, long-legged towers, built of iron piling driven into the rock and braced with rods, rose above the shoal water, and at night their huge lenses flashed forth a warning gleam for twenty miles or more over the sea.

Carysfort was the second from the beginning of the reef: a tall iron structure, the lantern or lens mounted atop of a wooden house built upon the platform at the end of the piling.

Inside of the house were the two bedrooms of the keepers, the oil-room, storerooms, and kitchen. Large tanks of iron held hundreds of gallons of water caught from the roof.

Outside the structure the platform extended six feet

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clear all around, making a comfortable porch or piazza, with a high rail which hung out over the sea at a height of about a hundred feet.

A long iron ladder extended from a trap-door in the flooring to the sea below, stopping at a landing about half-way, where the keepers had a small wood-pile, a flower-bed, and a few things which would stand exposure to the weather. At the sides of the platform above were davits, on which the two whale-boats hung.

Altogether, the little house and platform offered some inducements to men who were not particular about being alone for a long time.

It was many miles to the nearest land, clear out of sight from even the top of the tower; and to those who lived there it was like being at sea upon a small vessel which neither pitched nor rolled in a seaway, nor yet changed position in any manner. It was almost like living in mid-air.

It was a healthy life for the keepers. No germs of any known disease ever reached the distant lighthouse, and no sickness had ever occurred there.

On shore, it was a well-established axiom that among the offshore keepers none died — and few retired.

Every few months each could get a leave of absence on full pay and spend the time in any manner he pleased. The supply-ship stopped off the reef twice each year, and the lighthouse tender traversed the district as high as Cape Canaveral if anything was wanted.

So at least three or four times a year the keepers would hold communication with the outside world and converse with their fellow men.

The ships passing up the Hawk's Channel from Key West went within a few miles of the reef, and steamers going north outside sometimes stood in close enough to be recognized; but the Carysfort and Alligator Reefs were good places to keep away from, and no vessels except the spongers remained long in sight.

The spongers consisted of small sloops and schooners, which hailed from Key West, whose owners were the wreckers of the reef, and who spent the best part of the good weather in summer hunting the growths upon the coral which brought such good prices in the Northern drug-stores.

Few wreckers are piously inclined, some less so than others, but the outlying light was safe from thieves, for by hauling up the iron ladder the keepers were shut off completely from the world below. No one could, or would, climb those polished iron columns painted a dull red and as slippery as glass, unless something valuable was to be had at the top. So the keepers often left the trap-door open or unbolted, knowing their security.

Black Flanagan was the head keeper, a six-foot giant from Wisconsin, who had found his way to Florida while evading a Michigan sheriff. The work and confinement upon the light were not as irksome to him as might be expected:

His assistant was a preacher, a broken-down Meth-



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odist minister without a flock, whose religious tendencies were of an order which brooked solitude.

He had the reputation of being the most blasphemous man upon the Florida Reef, and his short sojourns ashore were marked by every excess capable of being committed by a human being within the law.

They called him "the howler," for, when he was drunk—which he invariably was an hour after he came ashore—he would stop at the village street corners and bellow for converts.

Any one within a mile would know what was taking place, and many would stop to listen. Failure to get responses brought forth such a torrent of profanity that he would have to be locked up until sober—when he would repeat the effort until his leave was over.

Then, solemnly and with ponderous dignity, he would take himself back to his home in the air over the blue Gulf Stream, and no one would see him again for several months. Black Flanagan would greet him with a grunt, and the two would take up the even life of lighting the lantern and putting it out.

Men were not struggling for their positions, and they took some comfort from the fact. They would probably live so for a long time, drawing good pay, with nothing whatever to do except clean and light the lamp.

It was a hot and sultry morning in August, and the keepers were hanging lazily over the rail of the

platform, when they saw the wrecking-sloop *Sea-Horse* coming slowly up the Hawk's Channel.

Her main-boom was well off to port, and she was fanning along before a very light air from the south-east, going not more than two knots an hour.

Upon her deck lay the crew of half-naked Conchs, while at her wheel the giant form of "Bahama Bill," the mate, stood leaning against the shaft, smoking a short pipe.

The fact that the black man now and then looked astern at a thin trail of smoke caused Black Flanagan to notice him.

"There goes the *Sea-Horse*," said he to his assistant; and they both came to the side of the platform nearest the passing vessel.

"Never seen that big feller show so much consarn about what was astern o' him, hey?" said the preacher. "Looks like they were from the east'ard." And he nodded significantly.

The sloop drew nearer, and the thin line of smoke rose blacker a dozen miles astern. Then there seemed to be signs of life aboard. Two men sprang up and began to drop large kegs overboard, making a great splashing. They kept this up for some minutes, and the keepers went inside the light for the telescope.

Astern of the sloop they made out small, black objects, which floated at intervals upon the swell, and were just discernible through the powerful glass.

For half an hour the men aboard the wrecking-vessel worked heaving cargo overboard, and, as they

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went along, the long line of tiny specks marked their wake.

"Corks," said Flanagan; "I thought so."

"They better hurry up," said the preacher; "the cutter's rising fast." As he spoke, he looked toward the steamer, which was now coming along in plain view, her hull rising slowly above the horizon, and her funnel pouring out a black cloud, which hung over the sea.

"They'll get caught fair enough. Half an hour, an' the officers'll be aboard."

"Well, they won't find anything. They'll never see them corks — she's already heading out to get them clear of the wake. When they catch her, she'll be an innocent sponger — an' we'll ——"

They looked at each other and smiled.

An hour later the *Sea-Horse* and revenue-cutter were upon the northern horizon heading into Biscayne, and the keepers were lowering their boats.

It is an unwritten law of the reef that a man may steal as much as he can from the United States, but he must not touch property belonging to an individual. A smuggler is not by any means a common thief.

Flanagan's ideas were different. He held that it was well to steal whenever the opportunity offered without danger of getting caught; and upon this principle he had little difficulty in converting his pious assistant, whose thirst had not been slaked for three full months.

Together they loaded three of the kegs into the

boats by simply pulling up the fishing-lines whose ends were floated by beer-bottle corks.

The lines anchoring the kegs were lying upon the bottom in six fathoms of water, out of sight, and the small cotton cords were amply strong enough to raise them. Once getting a grip of the anchoring-lines, they had no difficulty in hauling the liquor aboard their whale-boats.

The temptation to sample the goods was so strong that they desisted after the third keg, and made straight away for the lighthouse to enjoy the plunder. They could come back again and get the rest at their leisure, for the corks would be in plain view during the calm weather.

What transpired at the lighthouse during the next three days is somewhat hazy. No light appeared at night, and the Key West steamer almost ran ashore on her trip south. She reported the light out, and the tender was despatched to see what had happened.

The day was clear and bright, and the keepers were on the lookout, seeing the steamer when fully fifteen miles away. Their liquor was promptly put out of sight, and everything made snug to receive the inspector.

While there were evidences of drink in the faces of the men, they showed a properly kept light, and swore solemnly that they had not left the tower, and that the light had not failed at all.

They mildly suggested that the captain of the Key West steamer may have been in a highly reprehensible

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condition to have accused two perfectly sober and diligent light-keepers of neglect of duty.

The pious one broke forth in prayer and exhortation for the delivery of deluded pilots from the wiles of the devil, and soon the inspector was glad to go aboard his vessel to return to Key West.

The *Sea-Horse*, having been searched at Miami and found to be clear of contraband, was allowed to go her way. She stood out to sea, and headed down the Hawk's Channel just as the keepers lit the lantern for the evening watch. Black Flanagan was just sober enough to do this, and then turn in to continue his debauch with a pannikin of rum at his bed.

The *Sea-Horse* anchored near the light and waited for daylight to pick up the floats.

In the gray of early morning the black mate turned out the crew, leaving the captain below, and, taking the small boat, put off.

It was calm, and the corks were plainly visible. They were promptly hauled aboard, and the sunken kegs stowed until the end of the line was reached.

Here the mate found three floats missing, and, being in a suspicious frame of mind, he looked toward the light, which was still burning, although the rays of the rising sun were colouring the eastern horizon a rosy hue.

"They've got 'em, all right," said he. "If we're quick enough, we might catch 'em—give way hard."

The small boat with three men was headed for the

tower; and the *Sea-Horse*, with her captain now thoroughly awake, lay by for developments.

The big mate lost no time gaining the tower. It was broad day now, and Flanagan had just staggered up the steps into the lantern when the small boat arrived alongside the piles below.

In his befuddled state Flanagan saw nothing, until, after putting the light out, he came stumbling back again. He arrived in the lower room just in time to see the black head and shoulders of the mate emerging upward through the trap-door in the floor.

The mate was not in a good humour; moreover, he had turned out early without eating his breakfast, and his great black head and giant arms seemed supernatural in both vindictiveness and size.

Flanagan thought he had taken too much, and that the horrors were upon him at last. With a yell, he launched himself upon the seaman, taking him at a disadvantage, and endeavoured to smash him back into the void below.

But the mate was strong. He had come to the light expecting trouble. With a mighty effort he forced the keeper upward, and, amid a fierce snarling and threshing about, he soon engaged in a desperate struggle.

The "howler," hearing the uproar, sprang to the rescue, and joined in the fray just as the sailors, following their trusty mate, climbed through the door. In less than five minutes the keepers were lashed fast, and were being lowered down through the door into the waiting boat below.

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What remained of their spoil was also found and lowered after them; and in the bright light of the tropic sunrise the *Sea-Horse* put to sea, leaving the great tower of the Carysfort light to the westward.

For nearly a week no light was shown from the tower. Strangely enough, no one reported the light out.

The sixth day a sponger, sailing past at dark, noticed the absence of light, and went to the tower to see what was wrong.

He found it deserted, and, being a very poor man, he made his boat fast to the piles and took possession, enjoying the fare and taking care of the lantern in proper style for several days.

All might have gone well with him for several months, but for the fact that the supply-steamer was due, and arrived before he thought it time to make a get-away.

Finding the keepers missing, and no account made for them by the inhabitant, the officers promptly accused him of murdering them, and forthwith took him aboard the vessel to be carried ashore and tried. He was promptly convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to imprisonment for life.

Meanwhile, the *Sea-Horse*, having made the Bahamas, put the thieving keepers ashore to shift for themselves. After vainly trying to get passage back to their home, they finally managed to get a small boat and put to sea, to make the two hundred miles or more to the lighthouse.

They had been absent more than a month, and they arrived at Carysfort one sunny morning in time to see the two new keepers who had been appointed in their place take their whale-boat and start fishing along the reef to the northward of the tower.

Seizing the opportunity, they promptly gained the lighthouse and climbed into the landing, dropping the trap-door fast behind them.

The new keepers, seeing the strangers in possession of the tower, hailed them lustily, and started back to inquire their business.

For answer Flanagan leaned over the railing and gazed calmly down upon them with a quizzical look.

"What d'ye want?" inquired the tall keeper, in response to a hail.

"What are you doing in that light?" asked the new keeper.

"I am the keeper, and when you address me say 'sir,'" roared the tall man in stentorian tones. "Tie that boat to the spiles and git away from here, or I'll fall on top o' ye."

But the new keepers were not made of easy stuff. They gained the lower landing, and held forth under threats and persuasion for a day and a half, when the "howler," getting tired of their proximity, began attacking them with hot water and other missiles, which he hove or dropped from the platform above.

The new keepers could not get up, but they determined that the men above should not get down, and



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they built a bomb-proof shelter to protect themselves until help should arrive.

After two days, they finally gave it up and started for Miami, where they arrived and reported the state of affairs.

The inspector came along, but found the two worthies sober, and attending strictly to their duties.

They explained how they had been attacked by a huge smuggling vessel bound for the North, and how, after a desperate fight, they finally had been overpowered, taken forcibly from their abode in the light, where they had been attending to their duties, and put ashore in the Bahamas.

They described how, after a tremendous exertion, they had managed to get back again, only to find two strangers in possession of the tower. Naturally, they treated them as trespassers and took charge. The light had been kept regularly ever since, and they had no fault to find with the job.

After listening to their tale, there was nothing to do but to leave them to their duties, for nothing could be found against them.

Their absence from the light would have enabled the inspector to give them their discharge, but they could prove they had not left of their own accord. The forepart of their story would necessarily remain in the dark, for they would not talk of it, and the crew of the *Sea-Horse* would rather have it kept quiet. Besides, it would be more than useless to try to find the vessel from their description. The tender steamed

away for Miami to inform the authorities of the existence of the keepers.

"Virtue is usually triumphant," said the inspector to the judge, who ordered the release of the convicted prisoner. "But in this case there seems to be an exception."

"There are exceptions to every rule," quoted the judge wisely. "Light-keepers are rare birds—trouble will probably not happen again—I would therefore sentence them to life imprisonment in—well, I reckon there is no worse place than the Carysfort light."

"I don't know but what you are right," said the inspector.

## VIII

### The Trimming of Mr. Dunn

MRS. DUNN sat under the awning stretched over the quarter-deck of the yacht *Sayonara* lying in the stream, off the government coal-dock, at Key West. It was winter, but the air was warm, and white linen duck was the most comfortable clothing. Even the six men who composed the crew of the trim little schooner showed nothing but white in their garments, save the black silk ties knotted rakishly, drawing together their wide sailor-collars. Phenix Dunn was a broker, a gambler in the productions of others, and because of this he was wealthy. He had bought and sold certain commodities known as stocks, and they had proved profitable — so profitable that he had decided to take a few months away from the excitement of the game and buy a yacht and cruise.

Mrs. Dunn was something of a beauty. That is, many men thought so. Some women differed in opinions, especially those women whom she counted as her friends. Anyhow, she possessed a dashing air, a figure beyond criticism, and clothes that made Phenix say many bad words when the bills came in. Also she had a disposition the gentle side of which

had not been overdeveloped. She was not quarrelsome. Far from it. She had plenty of tact and ability, but the absence of children and household cares had given her more time than necessary for the contemplation of self, and this had not been satisfying. She worked it off by dint of much outdoor exercise.

Dunn joined her at the taffrail and flung himself into a chair with a show of wrath. Something had gone wrong, as it always does upon yachts of any size where the owner is not used to the sea or its peculiar people.

"The steward is gone, the cook is going, and here we are a thousand miles from anywhere at all — anywhere at all, I say; and the commandant of the yard will be aboard to-morrow with not less than twenty officers and their wives. What'll we do about it?" he rapped out.

"Why do you ask me? — I'm not good at riddles," answered his wife lazily.

"Well, we've got to take on a couple of blacks — niggers they call 'em here — and I don't like the idea of it. I've no use for 'em. What I want is Japanese servants. Japanese are good. Good fighters make good servants. You don't want a servant to think, and a good fighter never thinks. If he did he would see something else besides glory in walking up to a man with a gun. The Japs do that — and they are good servants. I don't want any of these black people aboard this vessel."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know," grumbled Dunn, "but when in doubt, take a drink — I'll go and get one."

While he was below, a dingy-looking vessel came slowly in the northwest channel. She was a heavily built sloop, and upon her deck lounged a rather numerous crew. They were picturesque, half-clothed in nondescript rags, their bare arms and shoulders seeming impervious to the rays of the torrid sunshine, for along the Florida reef, even in winter, the sun is burning.

The craft dropped anchor about twenty fathoms astern of the yacht, and when Dunn came from below, bringing with him an odour of gin and bitters, the crew of the sloop regarded him silently.

"Hello, a wrecker!" exclaimed Dunn.

His sailing-master had come to the taffrail and was gazing at the stranger, while Mrs. Dunn, careless of nautical neighbours, read her magazine.

"Yes, seems like one of the wreckers," said Captain Smart; "an ugly-looking crew, for a fact. They say these spongers divide their time between wrecking and smuggling. Not that either's bad if indulged in moderately, but they are apt to get loose after awhile and do queer things."

"There ought to be plenty of good in a wrecker, if he plied his trade right — ought to save lives and property," said Dunn. "Let's have a look through the glass."

The men of the wrecking-sloop gazed back insolently at the yachtsman, and a giant black man among

them rose up, placed his fingers in line, and applied the thumb of one hand to his big, flat nose, wiggling his huge digits in derision.

"That fellow is a corker," said Dunn, watching the wrecker good-humouredly.

"He's a big one, all right," assented Smart, "and I reckon they don't like us looking so hard at 'em."

"Lower a boat and send over for that fellow — I want him," said Dunn.

The captain looked at him for a moment. "I go ashore for Miss Marion Harsha in a few minutes," he said. "Mrs. Dunn gave the order. If you say so, I'll let the gig go for the wrecker afterward — go myself in her."

The yacht skipper was about forty, and slightly grizzled, his tanned face lined from work and exposure in more than one hard-run merchant vessel. But he made a rather good-looking yacht captain when dressed in his blue broadcloth coat with gold-braided cuffs, white duck trousers, and white canvas shoes. His cap bore the flag of Mr. Dunn upon its front, and was the only badge of dependence about him.

"All right, go ahead when you're ready; I'm in no hurry," said the owner. "Only I want to see that big nigger who was insolent enough to poke his fingers at me. Seems like he'd make a good man aboard here — steward, maybe, or even cook, if he knows how to do the work. They say these Southern darkies know how to cook like a French chef — and maybe

his wife takes in washing. Get him, bring him in — there's some one waving on the dock now."

"Bring the gig to the starboard gangway," ordered Smart; and two men swung into her from the boom-end and dropped her aft. In a moment the captain was on his way to the dock.

Miss Harsha was young, stout, pug-nosed, and short-haired, but she dressed well and swung her parasol daintily as she walked down the dock end beside a uniformed marine officer from the yard. At the landing-steps the officer assisted her into the gig, talking so interestedly that she failed to notice the yacht captain until he took her hand and helped her into the cushions in the stern-sheets. She suddenly dropped his hand, started, and stared at him a moment.

"You — you — what are you doing here?" she stammered.

"I'm to bring you aboard — Mrs. Dunn's orders," said Smart.

"Er — yes, I suppose so. Oh, good-bye, Major Simson, we'll see you to-morrow; you must come aboard, you know. Nice little boat — so different from a ship, and Miss Jennings will be there. Good-bye."

The officer bowed low, waved his helmet, and started back as the small boat pulled away.

"I thought you were still aboard the liner — the *Ampersand*," said Miss Harsha casually, as she edged away to give the captain room to steer.

"No, I left the next voyage. I was taught that a ship's officer was not in the class I supposed him to be."

"Please don't," interrupted the girl. "You know, or ought to know, the difference between a common sailor — a mate of a transatlantic steamer — and a naval officer. I hoped to spare your feelings, but you would not listen to me. I am the daughter of a naval officer. You are very little different from Mr. Dunn's butler, socially speaking. You wear his livery —"

"A very pretty uniform it is," suggested the skipper, interrupting and smiling complacently at her.

"You must pardon me if I hurt your feelings, but it seems necessary for me to make myself plainly understood —"

"Oh, I understand you thoroughly," said Captain Smart gently. "You are away above me — high up. I know I'm only a sailor. So was my father. But I'm not a bit ashamed of it. I work for my living. I have no kind Uncle Sam to provide for me that I may loaf about in white duck and seek diversion among the fairer sex. You'll excuse me if I cannot hold a poorer opinion of myself than I do of many of those who wear the country's livery and draw pay for it. They are mostly good fellows — but there are others."

"But you won't understand. It isn't that. It's the — well, we won't discuss it any further. I know you are too much of a man to make me uncomfortable



aboard the yacht. If you do, I shall have to speak to Mr. Dunn."

Captain Smart chuckled softly. He seemed to enjoy the situation very much, but he said no more, for the men rowing were beginning to listen to the conversation. He swung the boat alongside with precision, and assisted the girl up the companion.

Aboard the wrecker the crew watched these proceedings with interest. The big mate bit off a piece of tobacco and settled himself comfortably in the sun upon the deck, with his head just above the rail.

"Here comes the boat for us," grinned Captain Sanders, poking his head out of the cuddy. The rest grinned silently in turn.

Captain Smart came alongside, and the big mate rose to a sitting position at the rail, squirting a stream of tobacco over the side, barely missing the gig.

"Mr. Dunn, the owner of the *Sayonara*, would like to see you aboard the schooner," said Smart, addressing the black.

"What fur?" growled the giant.

"Oh, he has some business, I suppose — will you come?"

Sanders winked at his mate, and a Dutchman named Heldron nudged him in the ribs.

"Sho', I'll come," said the mate.

"Me, too," said Sanders, winking hard at the rest. "I'm the captain of the wreckin'-sloop *Sea-Horse*, an' it's no more'n proper for me to pay my respect to his nibs. This here little black boy" — pointing to the

black giant — "is my first officer. They calls him Bahama Bill. He's a bad man to call out o' his name."

Bahama Bill frowned and his ugly face leered for a moment at the crew on deck. Then he swung easily over the side and dropped with a crash into the small boat. Some of the men sniggered, but Sanders gave them a look and followed.

"Shove off," said Smart, and in a moment the gig was heading for the yacht.

Upon the deck of the schooner the captain and mate of the *Sea-Horse* seemed slightly out of place, but Bahama Bill swaggered aft with an air that had little retirement or modesty about it, and his skipper followed behind him.

The giant mate was much amused by the immaculate decks, the new rigging, and, above all, the spotless clothes of the crew. He knew a good ship, and this toy, this playship of the rich Northerner was much to his liking, for the *Sayonara* was strongly built and had much valuable material in her building.

Dunn was sitting under the awning aft when the visitors were announced. Sanders, hat in hand, stood awkwardly smiling and smirking at the ladies, but his mate cocked his cap over his ear and leered savagely at the owner.

"You sent fur us, cap — an' here we is," said he.

Dunn had been watching them for several seconds.

"Yes, yes, my good man, I wanted to see you," he said. "Do you know of any one who wants a job

cooking aboard here? I heard there were some good sea-cooks knocking about these keys, perhaps you're one — what?"

"Does I look like a cook?" said Bahama Bill, staring at him.

"Most certainly not, but appearances are sometimes deceptive. Maybe you know of one — what?"

"I does," said Bill.

"Can you get him aboard here to-day?" asked Dunn.

"I cayn't — nussur. I cayn't."

"Why not? I'll give good pay — fifty dollars. Steady job, if they make good."

"Well, de onliest good cook I knows is 'Scrappy Jule,' dey calls her —"

"Oh, no, she won't do; we don't want any disrep——"

"She's my wife," went on Bill, with a smoothness in his tone that made his captain smile broader than ever, "an' don't reckon she'll come abo'd no boat onless hit's me dat takes her."

"Perhaps she'll do some washing for us, then?"

Bill stared at the yachtsman for nearly a minute, and the smile died away from Sanders' face.

"Look here, yo' white man, did yo' send fur us to come ober heah to listen to a lot ob nonsense?" said Bill solemnly. "What yo' takes me fur, anyhow? We comes ober to take a drink an' pass de time o' day like ship's officer, an' yo' begins wid a lot o' fool-

ishness 'bout cooks an' washerwomen. What yo' reckon I am?"

"Good heavens! Captain Smart, come here a minute," called Mr. Dunn, while the two ladies who were near enough to hear the last part of the conversation sat staring at the wreckers in amazement.

"Take these men forward and give 'em liquor," said Dunn, as his skipper came aft, "and then send them back aboard their craft. They won't suit us."

"You men come with me," said Smart, motioning to Sanders and Bahama Bill. His tone was quiet, but there was no mistaking its meaning. He had seen enough of them, and would put them back aboard their craft. He had known from the first that it was a mistake to have brought them. They were a rough, independent type who respected no one, a type that had furnished the worst class of buccaneers and pirates some generations before. The West Indies had been infested with them for years, and these wreckers, the descendants of the wild seamen of the Spanish Main, were not the kind of men for a yacht.

Bahama Bill glared sourly at the men forward as he made his way to the gangway followed by Sanders.

"I don't drink with no such po' white men as yo'," said the giant. "Yo' kin put me back abo'd the *Sea-Horse* — sorry I came."

"I'll take a pull afore I go," put in Sanders. "Bring out yer pizen an' let's have a try at it. I seen more onsociable fellers than your owner — but I can't quite call to mind jest where."

"You ought to know yachtsmen, captain," said Smart. "There's a difference between them and seamen. I'll drink with you, if you don't mind."

"Naw, yer needn't. I don't want nothin' more to do with yer — see? I drinks alone."

Smart took a bottle of liquor from the boy, who had brought it from the cabin and poured a tumblerful, handing it to Sanders.

"Drink, and make your get-away," he said.

Sanders tossed off the glassful, and looked hard at him.

"I'll go when I git good an' ready," he said. "Don't give me none o' your slack, or I'll take it out o' yer." Then he flung the dregs of the liquor into Smart's face.

The sting of the fiery stuff blinded the captain for an instant, but it also angered him enough to do a foolish thing. He brought the bottle down upon the wrecker's head and stretched him upon the deck. The next instant he was seized by the giant black man and flung like a coil of rope into the scuppers.

"Don't make no rough-house, or you'll be sorry. Put us abo'd the *Sea-Horse*," said the big mate.

Dunn had rushed for the cabin at the first signs of a fracas, and now came forward with a rifle held in readiness.

Smart saw that any further strain would result in bloodshed, and he was used to handling men. With strong self-control he sprang to his feet and held up his hand to Dunn. Then he called for the boat in

a natural tone, and the men who had witnessed the trouble obeyed.

The yacht's deck was not the place for an affair of force. Captain Smart knew it at once and deplored his action. In a second he could precipitate a fight that would be fatal to at least one or more men, for Dunn was an excellent shot and exceedingly quick. The mate of the *Sea-Horse* cared as little for the rifle as for a cane, if he once broke loose. Even Sanders would not hesitate to face any kind of weapon. The two wreckers were ushered over the side and rowed back to their craft.

Bahama Bill was sullenly silent all the afternoon. Something, an indefinable something of refinement, of an air above what he had been used to, had kept him from an outbreak aboard the yacht. He had many times gone forth on the beach and made rough-house for the sport of it, handling half a dozen tough long-shoremen, armed and unarmed. On the *Sayonara* the presence of the ladies had kept him in check. He could not quite understand it. Sanders had less control of himself, and growled out vengeance during the hours of daylight. When it grew dark he took his mate to one side.

"When the tide turns we'll rake her — hey?" he said.

"I dunno — I cayn't quite make up my mind," said Bill.

"Feared?" — with a sneer.

"Feared o' what?" asked the black man.

"Oh, I dunno. I reckon the captain, or the owner — hey?"

Bahama Bill spat disdainfully over the side into the dark water where the phosphorus shone in the ripples. He sat for an hour upon the rail, and the rest of the crew watched him, for they knew pretty well what was coming.

After supper the big mate went on deck. Heldron brought him a hook, a powerful instrument with a long tooth that would reach well into the seams of a vessel and pull out any calking that might be there. Sanders took out a fine steel bar, a regular jimmy, and joined them. The rest of the crew remained below and played checkers or cards, making no comment whatever.

The giant mate took the bar and hook and slid gently over the side, and the next instant they saw a thin line of fire, his wake, leading toward the yacht.

Aboard the yacht the incident of the afternoon was almost forgotten. Miss Harsha played the piano and Mrs. Dunn sang sea songs, while Dunn smoked and applauded alternately. The men were all below, and only Smart and his mate, a tall Yankee sailor from Maine, sat on deck, for the air was chill.

"Looks like we'll have a bit o' weather coming along soon," said the mate to Smart; "heavy bank makin' to th' north'ard."

The captain smoked in silence. He thought of the scene on deck that day, and he felt more than ever that Miss Harsha had reason to feel displeased at his

attentions. He remembered the nights upon the liner when he had taken the girl for walks against the rules of the company, the usual ending of such affairs, and the cold-blooded manner in which she had sent him off. He was occupied intensely with his thoughts and keenly disgusted. In the dark water alongside a large fish seemed to make considerable disturbance and attracted his attention. He went to the rail and looked over, and instantly the creature, whatever it was, sank below the surface. Then he went back and smoked.

Bahama Bill, the wrecker, had reached the yacht and had started to work her seams about three strakes below the water-line. It was his business to drag out the oakum and spread the seam, leaving nothing but a bare thread to keep the water from coming into the hull.

It was an old game, but new to the vicinity and victims. When the vessel filled and sank, which she would surely do if not docked at once, the wreckers would be on hand to claim their salvage. As this would amount to about one-third the value of the yacht, it would be worth while. Even if the marks of bar and hook were discovered, no one, unless an expert in the methods of the reefers, would suspect what had caused the trouble. No one could possibly give any testimony of any value against the wreckers.

They would board her boldly at just the right moment, and, knowing her condition, would have no



rivals on hand. Her salvage would ease the pain of the insults they had received at the hands of her owner. He wouldn't drink with them — what? He would wish he had drunk many bottles before they were through with him, the rich bum. Who was he to put on airs to them?

The giant black diver had raked the seam and then swung his weight upon the bar. The two-inch planking of the small vessel gave to his tremendous strength. His head, a foot beneath the surface, kept him out of sight while he worked, but he had to raise it clear every little while to breathe. At these times he turned his eyes upward and tried to pierce the gloom, letting just his nose come out, and drawing breath ready for instant disappearance should any one be looking over the side.

It was desperate work, toiling there in the tideway, and, in spite of his power, he found that he must rest after the first seam had been raked to the bends. He jammed the bar fast in a seam and clung to it, lying at full-length and letting his body float with the current.

The night was quite still and very dark. The bank of cloud in the north told of a heavy wind approaching, the uncomfortable norther which sweeps at periods over the reef during the winter months. The water, however, was always warm; the close proximity of the Gulf Stream kept it near the temperature of eighty all through the year. While he rested, he was aware of a movement in the sea near him, and

he sniffed the air uneasily. The smell of a shark was plain in his nostrils.

To lie quietly in the sea at night with a shark in the vicinity was to invite almost certain destruction. To thrash about aimlessly would surely attract attention from the deck above, and bring death in the shape of a rifle-bullet, or, worse yet, a boat, which would catch him before he could gain the *Sea-Horse*. He left the bar in the *Sayonara's* side, and, grasping the hook, swam strongly to the bobstay.

Silently the mighty black hauled himself clear of the water, just as a long shadow, darker than the surrounding sea passed beneath him, leaving a long line of fire to mark its passage. He had cleared with about a second to spare. The sea-monster passed on down the tide toward the open ocean, but Bahama Bill waited before slipping back again to his task.

In a short time he worked the next seam; then, taking the thin cotton line he had fast about him as a belt, he unwound it, pulled the last of the calking oakum out, and replaced it quickly with the line the entire length of the destroyed seam, leaving the ends clear to be jerked forth at a moment's notice. It would at once let a stream of water into the hull of the yacht which would test her pumps to their fullest capacity, and where he had worked there was hardly a trace of violence. A few augur-holes would have accomplished the end more readily, but they would remain as telltale evidence. The starting of a seam

and butts could not be proven against such careful work.

At the right minute the wreckers would pull the cord, and then it would be — stand by the pumps or run her ashore. All they would have to do now would be to follow her about the reef until she arrived at a spot conveniently far from a tugboat or dry dock, follow her like a shark until, wounded and unable to keep the sea, they would fall upon her the instant her crew and owner would leave her, or call for help.

Bahama Bill had just put the finishing touches upon his excellent work, and was resting, preparatory to swimming back to the *Sea-Horse*, where he knew Sanders and the rest were awaiting his arrival with some impatience. He had his bar jammed in a seam, and was hanging upon it, when the mate of the *Sayonara* happened to peer over the side.

The wrecker saw him just in time, and sank from view. In doing so he made a slight disturbance in the sea, and the phosphorus flared and trailed from him, giving him the long shape beneath the surface common to a fish of about his length.

"I reckon I'll take a whack at them fellers swimmin' around us," said the sailor to Smart, "seems to me there might be a barracuda, or jew-fish, loafing about. I'm going to get the harpoon."

Bill, instead of making good his get-away, at this moment, hung easily on to his resting-place and poked his head clear about the time the mate had ceased speaking. Seeing that the head over the rail had gone,

the wrecker started to pull his bar clear, and had just shoved off from the yacht's side, when the mate arrived with the iron.

The long Yankee had been accustomed to spearing sword-fish upon his native coast in summer, and he hesitated not an instant, but hurled the iron at the form below him. As he did so Bill saw the movement and gave a mighty shoot ahead. It saved his life by a fraction of a second, but the iron struck him fair upon the ankle and passed through between his heel-cord, or tendon, and the bone. He was hung as securely as a quarter of beef upon a hook.

"I got him," yelled the mate. "Lend me a hand, Captain Smart."

"Killed him outright," said the captain. "He makes no flurry for a heavy fish. Must have struck his backbone."

They put their weight upon the line, and it came in easily, hauling as though a log were fastened to the iron. And in the meantime Bahama Bill was whirling over, trying to think of some way to cut clear.

Still holding to his bar, the giant wrecker came swashing alongside the yacht, making a lot of foam and fire, which completely hid his identity. By good luck the men above him stopped hauling just when his great weight began to put a heavy strain upon the line.

Captain Smart, not wishing to trust the thin runner, went for a heavy line to make a bowline to slip over the fish's tail and heave him aboard shipshape.

Bill jammed the jimmy into a seam and worked it far enough in to get a strong hold. His head was half-submerged, but he held on while the strain upon the harpoon lifted his leg clear of the sea. His leg was numbed from the wound, and when they slipped the bowline down upon it he knew there was no use of further resistance.

The pain was intense when they put the line to a tackle, and he gave up. Throwing the bar clear to make away with the last evidence of his work, he let them haul him feet foremost into the air and hang him dangling over the rail.

"A nigger, by all that's holy!" exclaimed the long mate. "Now, how in the name did ——"

"The mate of the wrecker," said Smart, slacking the giant down upon the deck and gazing at him. "Hooked in the ankle, all right and seamanlike. Is he drowned?"

"Naw, I ain't drowned," said Bill, staggering to his feet, the iron from the harpoon still transfixing his leg. "Yo' put a stopper on that barb, and pull that iron out. Cayn't a man take a swim without you fellows huntin' him like a bloody fish?"

The mate offered his apologies, somewhat tinged with humour, for the mistake, and, being entirely without suspicion, went below to get a stiff drink for his victim. The giant black stood gazing down at the yacht captain for a moment, and as the wound did not bleed to any extent, he refused to have any further fuss made over it.

"Aren't you afraid of sharks — to be swimming about this harbour in the night?" asked Smart.

"No, I ain't scared o' much," said Bill, "an' I takes it all in good part, yo' ketchin' me the way yo' did. I don't mind the little hole in mah laig, but I do mind bein' h'isted up feet fo'most. I don't allow no liberties wid me body, 'n' ef yo' had dun it a purpose, I sho' would have tu wake yo' up some — but I takes no offence."

The long mate appeared with the liquor, and the wrecker drank it down.

"Ah'm goin' now," said Bill, and without further ado he made a plunge over the rail and was gone. A faint trail of fire showed his rapid progress toward the *Sea-Horse*, and his captors were left alone again on deck.

"That was something strange — what?" said the mate.

"'Twas a bit out of the ordinary," said Smart, thinking of the strangeness of the scene, the dark night, the disturbed water, and the sudden appearance of a giant negro hauled on deck feet foremost by a bowline run over a whale-iron. "You better keep an anchor-watch to-night. Some of those fellows might steal half our brasswork before morning. I'm going to turn in. Good night."

## II

In the brisk wind of the failing norther, the *Sayonara* hoisted her snowy canvas. The mainsail, taut

as a board and white as the coral-beach, stood with luff cutting the wind and leach cracking gently while the boom-tackles held it like a hound in leash. The foresail was run up, and the word was passed aft that the ship was ready.

Mr. Dunn stood near the companion and chatted to Miss Harsha, while Mrs. Dunn entertained two marine officers from the yard with tales of the yacht. The reception aboard the day before had been a success, and these remaining guests were to spend a week cruising to the northward as far as Boca Grande.

Dunn was a keen fisherman, and would try for tarpon, the giant herring of the reef.

"I tell you, Miss Marion," said he, "it's a great sport. It takes skill to land one of those fellows, skill to hook him, skill to play him, and skill to kill 'em — are you a good fisherman?"

Miss Marion, pug-nosed, fat, and not entirely good-natured, thought a moment. Not upon fish, but concerning certain officers she had known lately.

"I — er — I really don't quite know, you know. I never tried it. It must be something grand. It appeals to me, the idea of fishing. It must be awfully exciting when you've hooked him." And her eyes roved just for a moment in the direction of Mrs. Dunn and her friends.

"She's hove short, sir," said Smart, coming near. "Shall we break her out and let her go? The tide is just right, and the wind a close reach up the Hawk's Channel."

"Er — yes. I don't know. Well, yes, let her go. What's the odds?" murmured Dunn, losing interest suddenly. "You'll excuse me, Miss Marion." And he went down the companionway. "When in doubt, take a drink," he repeated to himself. "Maybe I'll run into some people who think of something besides their — their ——" but he left the sentence unfinished as he drank off a dram of gin and lime-juice. Dunn was a bit of a sport at bottom, and his wife's friends were not — not of the kind he was used to. It was hard to run a yacht as big as his schooner for the amusement of silly women, and even more silly men.

Captain Smart hove up his anchor, hoisted both jib and staysail, and while the trim little ship broke off to port, the white-ducked crew neatly catted her hook and stretched up her topsails, sending out a big balloon forward which bellied out and sent her racing through the northwest passage.

It was a beautiful day, and the sun shining upon the white hull made a very pretty picture of the fabric rushing through a whitening path upon the blue water. The solid-silver trophies in the saloon were made fast in their places, for the vessel was leaning heavily away from the breeze, and Dunn locked his little buffet and came on deck to join his guests.

The men of the *Sea-Horse* watched the yacht until she was hull-down to the northward, her canvas alone marking the spot of her whereabouts, which was changing at the rate of ten knots an hour. But they were in no particular hurry to follow.



Sanders had found out where she was bound, and it was not until late in the afternoon, when the sun was setting, that the *Sea-Horse* hoisted her dirty mainsail. Then she stood away for Cuba, passing out by the Sand Key Light into the Gulf Stream.

When darkness fell she was shortened down and allowed to drift along slowly with the current, which took her many miles before the following day.

In the morning the *Sayonara* stood in through the pass of Boca Grande. It is here that the tarpon, the giant herring of the south sea, makes his entrance to the shallow waters of the Florida reef. Dunn lost no time engaging guides and preparing for the kill. In the waters of the reef one does not catch fish; he kills them. A tarpon is not usually eaten, and is caught solely for the excitement of the fight. Nearly all the great game fish are equally unpalatable, therefore the sportsman has long ceased to speak of his catch, which in other waters is useful, and generally brought home for food.

The small boats were gotten overboard, and the party, made up in pairs with a guide to each, headed into the pass. Boats from the floating hotel back among the keys joined them, and during the forenoon the fish struck.

Dunn managed to land two huge fellows, but the boat containing Miss Harsha and the major of marines caught nothing. If there was an attempted killing, it was only witnessed by the guide, and he, being

a discreet "Conch," had the good taste to remain silent for ever afterward.

Late in the evening, after the fish had stopped striking, the party sat upon the deck of the *Sayonara* enjoying the soft air of the semitropical sea. Far away to the southward the sail of a single vessel rose above the sapphire rim of the horizon. The air was warm, and felt almost oppressive. There was evidently going to be a change in the weather, and Smart noticed it at once.

"The glass has fallen considerable since morning," said he to Dunn, "and the pass is not the best anchorage in the world. I don't exactly like the idea of lying so far off."

"We'll stay as long as the fish bite," said Dunn. "Now that I've gotten here you'll not scare me away until there's something happened. Give her plenty of scope and let her ride it out, if it blows. A bit of motion will do the party good, shake 'em up and put some sense into them. Stay where you are."

"All right, sir," said Captain Smart. "I don't want to cut out the sport, but if I know anything of the weather by signs, it'll sure blow some before this time to-morrow. The warm weather may make the fish come in, but it means something back of it. It's too late in the season for such warm air up here, or it's too early. We'll catch it from the southeast, and we'll have a nasty sea where we are lying."

"Let her blow," said Dunn, "but when in doubt, take a drink." He went below.

"I do so wish we would have a terrible storm — then you could have a chance to show how superior a U. S. marine officer is in an emergency," said Miss Harsha, smiling up at the major, who had noticed the threatened weather and had heard part of the conversation between Dunn and his captain.

The major leered at her. He was trying to think how a pug-nose and freckles would inspire him at the psychological moment. It seemed to cause him an effort, for he spoke wearily in reply.

"You remember what we did at Guantanamo?" he said.

"Yes, but I have heard of nothing else since the Spanish War," said the girl sweetly. "You surely have something else in the record of your excellent corps, for I know personal bravery exists everywhere in it. I love heroes — men who can do things. It's foolish, no doubt, but, then, most women are foolish. What use would your beautiful uniform be to us if we were not?"

The major gazed out over the darkening sea and watched the tiny speck of white where the single sail rose above the horizon. He was tired and thirsty, and he had seen Dunn go below.

"We are to have a fish-dinner — I must go and get out of these fish-killing togs," said Miss Harsha, and she left him to follow his inclinations.

The night was dark and quiet, the sea murmuring distantly under the black pall which crept up from the southward. The glass fell lower, and Smart ranged

twenty fathoms of cable to let out when the wind struck. He also got his heavy anchor ready to let go, with sixty more, and made ready with hemp-stoppers to take the strain off the bitts when she surged.

There were only four fathoms of water in the part of the pass where they lay, and with a great scope to both anchors he felt certain that he could hold on unless some accident happened.

The sea would not break where he lay, on account of the formation of the reef beyond, and if he could get all his line out before she started to drag, he could hold her without great danger, although she would do some lively jumping if it blew heavy. A man on watch would report the first change for the worse.

By midnight all was silent aboard. The anchor-light burned brightly, and its rays fell upon the form of the man upon the forecastle, who nodded drowsily. The calm continued, and the great flame from the lighthouse at the pass sent long streaks into the darkness.

Coming along with the flood-tide and just going fast enough to keep steering-way upon her, a small vessel headed into the pass, burning no lights and heading close to where the *Sayonara* lay. At her helm a giant negro sprawled, and upon her deck several men lay in attitudes of great ease.

"She lays still, like mit a ghost," said Heldron, peering at the yacht.

"Good graft," said Sam, straining his eyes to catch every detail.

"I reckon we'll git to work on her," said Sanders. "Lower down those jibs and slack the anchor away easy when I luff her under the lee o' that p'int yander. How is it, Bill? Do you feel like swimming to-night?"

Bahama Bill, the mate of the wrecker, growled out an assent. His leg was sore from his experience with the iron in the hands of the *Sayonara's* mate, and his feelings were exceedingly ruffled from certain personal affronts he had endured from the yacht's owner. Could he cook? Could his wife, the renowned Julia, wash? Well, he would ask a few questions some day after settling his account with the yacht — maybe.

At present the cotton line he had placed in the opened seam was ready to haul out. Then he would witness some work upon that yacht's deck. There would be something doing.

He grinned as he thought of the trim white duck clothes. How they would look after twenty-four hours' work at the pumps! Even the yacht's captain, who seemed to be something of a sailor in spite of his wonderful rig, would have something to do besides sitting about like a well-dressed monkey. And as for those officers, the guests of Dunn — well, he had already had dealings with them, and once spent the night in the "cooler" for ruffling a couple of their Jap messmen.

"Yo' kin lower down the starbo'd boat when we lets go," said Bahama Bill; "'n' I wants one o' you

fellers to drap to lor'ard toe pick me up, fer I'll be comin' mighty fast — see? ”

Sam understood, and a few minutes later the *Sea-Horse* had hooked the reef close in the shelter of the key and about a mile distant from the yacht. Her mainsail was left standing, in case of sudden need. They could lower it any minute after the job was done. If anything happened they could stand out in less time than it takes to tell of it, for the head-sails were all ready to hoist and the anchor just holding. Six strokes upon the brakes, and she would go clear. Then, with everything drawing, she would stand through the pass.

The mate dropped into the small boat, and Sam rowed him rapidly ahead of the yacht. He would drop overboard and drift and swim quickly down with the current, while the small boat would circle around at a great distance and out of sight to pick him up after he had finished and drifted astern.

Swimming strongly with a deep breast-stroke which made no foam or noise, Bill slipped through the black sea like a fish. In a short time he gained the anchor-chain, which strained out ahead with the force of the tide upon the hull.

Resting for a few moments and listening to make sure the man on deck had not seen him, he let himself drift along the vessel's side until he reached the end of his line. This he pulled out of the seam and let go.

It opened her for a length of thirty feet — a thin,

nasty leak, which would be hard to find and impossible to stop without docking. It was the work of an expert wrecker, and he grinned to himself as he let the current take him away.

Not a mark had he made upon the beautiful white hull, and yet she was even now filling rapidly through seams which had been carefully calked.

Of course, if the weather remained calm enough for them to work a small boat alongside and study her bilge a couple of feet below the water, they would come upon the seam. But the weather was not going to remain calm very long. He knew it would be blowing hard before daybreak, before there would be any light to see her smooth side below the water where the green of her copper paint had hardly been disturbed.

He had passed his knife along the seam after the line was removed, and it was open. His work was done.

Sam picked him up half a mile astern, and they rowed silently back aboard the *Sea-Horse*. All the others had turned in, and they did likewise, after lowering down the mainsail and paying out enough cable to hold the vessel should it blow before they awoke. The small boat was towed astern, for they were well back behind the key, and quite sheltered.

In the still hours of the early morning Captain Smart was awakened by the unusual sound of water washing about in the yacht's bilge. He roused himself and listened. The first note of the rising wind droned

through the rigging, and the man on watch came to his door to call him. In a moment he was on deck.

The night was still dark, although it was nearly four o'clock. The wind had come from the southeast, and it was freshening every moment. The hands were called, and the cable given to the anchor while the heavy bower was dropped, that she might set back upon them both.

There was plenty of room, and she brought up nicely, riding easily to the fast-increasing sea. She was heading it, and, therefore, had not begun to plunge enough to wake the party aft. But every moment the whistling snore aloft told of what was coming.

After seeing that his ship was snug and safe for the time being, Smart went below to get into his oilskins. It had not yet started to rain, but it was coming, and he would not have time to leave the deck if anything went wrong.

While he sat upon his bunk-edge he again heard the washing sound from below. It came loud and insistent, not to be confounded with the wash from the sea outside. At that moment the mate came into his room.

"What's the matter below, sir?" he asked. "Sounds like we've got water in her. Shall I try the pumps?"

"Well, if we do, it will frighten every one. It's going to blow a regular snorter. There can't be any



water in her — she's tight as a bottle. You might sound her, but don't let any one see you do it."

Before Smart had buttoned on his sou'wester, the mate came below again. He had a naturally long face and seemed solemn even in his most happy moment. Now he pulled a face as long as a rope-yarn.

"Four feet of water in her, sir," he said, and he looked at Smart as though that officer had said something to hurt him.

Smart gazed at him for a moment in perplexity. He saw his mate was sober. He was too good a sailor to come aft with any silly story. He knew there was something wrong, and he sprang up the companion.

In the rush of the wind on deck all sounds from below were, of course, silenced. The droning roar in the rigging as squall after squall tore past made it evident that it was beginning to blow some. Forms appeared aft, and Dunn came staggering along the rail to the mainmast followed by his male guests.

"Will she hold on all right?" called Dunn to his captain, who now stood at the pump-well with the sounding-line in his hand. It was too dark for the owner to notice the skipper's movements, but Smart put the line out of sight.

"Oh, yes, she'll hold all right," bawled the captain. "You better go below for a bit, or else put on your rain-clothes; it's going to wet up here soon."

The men stood near the mast for a few moments, and, seeing that nothing unusual was taking place,

began edging aft again. A spurt of rain sent them down the cabin companion, and Smart dropped his line into the well. It showed a depth of four and a half feet of water below, or just up to the cabin floor.

Something must be done at once. All hands were called to the pumps, and the clank of the brakes warned the owner that all was not well. He came on deck with his guests, and as they were now in their rain-clothes, Smart requested them to get busy. He would need all the men he could get to keep her clear.

Daylight dawned upon a wild sea to the eastward. The reef roared in a deep thunder, but the heaviest sea was shut off from them. Streaming scud fled past above them with the gale, and the mastheads seemed to pierce a gray sky, which hurled itself to the northward at a terrific rate.

The sea that struck the *Sayonara* was short, and had a great velocity, but it was not high enough to make her plunge bows under. She rode it with short jerks and leaps, smashing into it and sending a storm of flying water as high as her crosstrees. This the wind hurled aft and away in a heavy shower.

She was holding to one hundred fathoms on one, and seventy fathoms upon her largest anchor, and as the sea was shallow where she lay, the taut chains stretched right out ahead, like two stiff bars of metal.

"How did it happen — what is it?" Dunn kept asking; but his skipper could give no response. All he knew was that she was filling fast, so fast that they could just keep her about even with the leak. It was

three hours before it showed less than four feet of water below, and by that time the men were getting tired.

Smart told off the watches, and sent one below for a rest while the makeshift cook tried to get all hands some coffee. They were going to have plenty of work cut out for them, and they needed all the rest and refreshment they could get.

With only one watch at the pumps the water began to gain slowly upon them, and by noon it was as high as ever again. The yacht plunged heavily under this extra weight, and Smart gave her every link he had aboard, afterward putting heavy stoppers upon both cables to take the strain of the setback from the bitts.

He had done all he could, and now waited with anxious eye upon the glass, hoping for the shift which he knew must soon come. If he could hang on for another twelve hours, he felt certain he would ride the gale down safely; then — well, then it was up to Dunn to say whether to risk a run to Key West or beach her. Just now the sea was too heavy to think of going to leeward anywhere. She would go to pieces on the reef.

Smart crouched under the lee of the foremast, watching men and anchors alternately. Dunn joined him.

"The women are getting a bit nervous, Smart," said the owner. "There's no danger as long as she holds, is there?"

"Not a bit," was the short answer. He was think-

ing how much easier it would have been if Dunn had allowed him to make a good anchorage before the blow began.

"Well, I'll go below and tell 'em — when in doubt take a drink — come!" And his two guests followed him.

All that wild day the *Sayonara* tugged and plunged at the end of her cable, the water gaining slowly in her bilge; and when the darkness with all its terrors came on, the men began to have some misgivings as to what the yacht would do.

Just as the wild night darkened the storm-torn sea, Smart wiped the ends of his glasses to get them free from the flying salt water and spume. He then took a last look around to see if anything was in sight. Only the lighthouse showed above the waste of reef and white water to the westward. Not a sign of humanity. Not a thing else from which to expect human sympathy.

Suddenly he noticed something like a mast rising from behind the end of the key. Yes, it was a single vessel, snug and close in behind the shelter. He could not make out her hull, or he would have at once recognized the *Sea-Horse*, victor over many a hard-fought battle with the elements of the Florida reef, now lying snug and safe as a house with her crew below. He was not aware of it, but a pair of eyes were at that moment gazing fixedly at his vessel, peering out of a dirty port-hole.

Bahama Bill had never ceased to watch the yacht

from the first drone of the storm, and all the night the giant mate had kept watch upon the tiny star of his anchor-light as it rose and fell with each plunge.

As the night wore on and the water had not gained sufficiently to make it necessary to call all hands, Smart went below for the first time and took a good meal, eating heartily of everything, and washing down the food with two large cups of coffee.

It was now nearly midnight, and the glass showed signs of rising. The squalls were of less violence, and the captain hoped now to weather it out safely before putting his ship upon the beach to get at the leak.

While he ate he was aware of a sudden shock. The *Sayonara* seemed to shift her nose from dead into the sea, and then a peculiar trembling of the hull told him of that thing all ship-masters dread. At the same instant the rush of feet sounded upon the deck, and the mate poked his head into the hatchway.

"Starboard anchor's gone, sir — she's dragging back unto the reef inside the light ——"

"Get the foresail on her — all hands!" roared Smart, tearing up the ladder.

The *Sayonara* had carried too heavy a load. She was too deep with the water in her, and had at last parted her steel cable to starboard. The other anchor was not heavy enough to hold her with the extra tons of water below; she had broken it clear, and was dragging it back — back upon the coral bank, where she would soon be a wreck if she struck.

One instant told Smart what he must do. He was

too far in to try to get to sea, and, even if he were not, he could not drive the half-sunken vessel up against that sea and wind. To do so would be certain destruction, for there would be no chance to keep the leak under. He must run her in and beach her where it would be least dangerous.

In the blackness of midnight he might make a mistake and hit a bad spot, but it was the only chance. If he could get her far enough in behind the key to make a lee upon the bank beyond, he might save her — at least save all hands. There was little room to work her, but she was a staunch ship.

“Cut the chain — break it with an axe!” he bawled. And the men sprang to obey.

The thunder of the close-reefed foresail brought Dunn from below, but as he was no use forward he wisely remained aft. His two guests stood near him. A feminine form appeared in the companionway.

Smart was at the wheel, rolling it hard over to break the yacht off and fill away the foresail, but he caught the words:

“Oh, isn’t it grand? A real storm! Oh, major, this is what you’re used to. I know you will bring us out of it all right. No, I don’t need a wrap, my dear Mrs. Dunn. Splendid!”

The *Sayonara* filled away, the chain was broken, and the dragging anchor left behind. With the wind upon her quarter, she tore away through the night, leaving a white path astern.

Smart strained his eyes for the edge of the bank

behind the lower key. It was the most sheltered spot, but even in a sheltered spot to leeward there would be a mighty sea breaking, with the wind blowing with hurricane force. He would do the best he could.

The whole uselessness of the affair lay upon him, and he swore, muttering at the folly of his owner. A little shelter and the yacht would have ridden down anything as long as she would float. The leak would not have mattered so much had they been in out of that heavy sea that made her surge so heavily upon her cables. He could have kept it under easily enough, but now he was running the vessel to her end to save those aboard.

The light of the Boca Grande Pass showed him the direction of the reef. The surrounding blackness showed nothing. He must make his landing by the bearing of the lighthouse, and trusting that his distance would be run right.

A heavy squall snored over him, and the straining bit of foresail responded to the furious rush, heeling the *Sayonara* down to her deck. All about them the water was snow-white with the sweep of the wind. He heard a call from forward, and saw his mate running aft at full speed. A heavier sea lifted the yacht, heeled her to leeward; then there was a tremendous shock.

A wild burst of sea tore over the yacht, the following sea had broken against her side as she stopped in her run. The water was blinding, but Smart could feel her swing up, and off from the wind. The wheel

was suddenly whirled out of his hands, and with a crash the *Sayonara* set her heel again into the coral of the reef.

"Get below, every one," roared Smart, and the struggling Dunn, with the major, who had been washed to leeward, fought their way back to the companion.

Smart shoved them roughly down and followed, closing the hatchway after him. It was the only way. To remain on deck while the sea broke over her would be to invite almost certain death. Again and again the yacht rose and crashed down upon the coral bank beneath, the smashing crash of her rending timbers making a deafening noise to those confined in her. It was like being within a drum while it was being beaten by a mighty stick.

If they could remain below until the vessel drove well up on the bank, it would be well. If the filling hold drove them on deck they would have to face a whirling sea, which was breaking in a wild smother clear across the wreck. Smart watched the water rising above the cabin floor, and waited.

Forward, the mate had got the crew below and closed all hatches. It would be some time before she filled full enough to drive them on deck, and all the time the stanch little craft was driving higher and higher up the bank into shallow water.

Smart took a look at the glass. It was rising. There would be three more hours of inky darkness, and he hoped the little ship would last it out. In the



morning it would break clear, and there would be good weather, a splendid chance to save not only the people aboard the vessel, but much of her valuable fittings.

Dunn tried to calm the fears of his guests. The major, white and ghastly in the light of the cabin lamp, tried to put on an air of unconcern. His companion tried to joke with Miss Harsha, but even that young woman seemed to feel that the storm was entirely too real, the end not quite in sight.

"When in doubt, take a drink," suggested the owner, and proceeded to fill three glasses. A sudden rise and smash of the yacht flung the glasses to leeward, where they shivered into fragments upon the cabin deck. Dunn saved his whiskey only by hanging on to it with one hand, while he clung to the buffet with the other.

The water rose rapidly in the cabin. It was over the floor two feet deep by three o'clock, and the mate came through the bulkhead door and announced that the yacht had stove amidships, and was hanging upon a point of coral, which prevented her from driving farther in.

As near as he could make out, there was still seven feet of water alongside to leeward, the vessel now lying almost broadside to the sea, which broke heavily over her. She had been drawing twelve feet, and had driven up five feet, resting upon her starboard bilge, except when she lifted with the sea. Something must be done, for the water would be too deep below to

remain there much longer. It would be at least five feet deep in the cabin, and would swash about enough to drown any one.

The roar of the wind was growing rapidly less, but the crash of the seas prevented Smart from noting it definitely. He waited and watched the rising flood. O for a little daylight, to see where he had struck! Was there a chance to make a landing? To put off in that smother in the small boats without knowing where he would bring up was too disagreeable to contemplate until the last moment.

The water gained steadily, and the women became panicky. The major no longer jested, and Dunn was not in doubt. He had stopped drinking, for the peril of the night was upon him now in earnest.

Smart, with the mate, made his way on deck, closing the hatchway after them. They crawled along the weather-rail and gained the waist, where the whale-boat was snugly stowed under the shelter of the rail to leeward. The water broke over them constantly, but the wind was going down, and Smart decided to make ready to try to effect a landing.

The whale-boat was in perfect order, and it would hold all hands, but he decided that half of the crew should make the first attempt, in order to see if there was any place to make the beach. They could bring her back for the rest, and if they failed, there was the gig; it would hold the women and the rest of the crew.

When they had the boat over the side, it was all

they could do in the darkness to keep it from smashing back with the back-wash of the sea. The mate managed to get four men into her, and sprang in himself. Smart went aft and brought Dunn and some of the others, the major staying with Mrs. Dunn and Miss Harsha. Ten men left the *Sayonara*, and were instantly swallowed up in the gloom. Then Smart went back below to await the mate's return.

In the meantime the water below had risen so high that even the transoms upon which the refugees perched were several inches under, and at each surge it went all over them, roaring and washing about. The cabin lamp was extinguished, and the black darkness which ensued lent terror to the turmoil in that little cabin.

An hour passed, and no boat came back. It looked ominous. The mate would surely come back if he could. He was evidently lost or unable to pull up against the heavy wind and sea. There was no use waiting any longer. The water was still rising below, and the women must be taken ashore if it were possible.

Smart got the rest of the watch to work upon the gig, and by superhuman efforts they finally swung her to leeward, and held her clear of the side. Miss Harsha was lowered into her, and then Mrs. Dunn. The latter seemed perfectly at ease, and scorned the assistance of the major, who gallantly offered to go with her. The noise of the roaring water precluded any attempt at conversation, and the darkness made

all cling close to the rail in a bunch, each helping the other as best they could.

After all hands had jumped in, Smart followed, and gave the order to shove clear, and, with the hope of striking the bank in a safe spot, he headed out from under the lee of the wreck. The gray dawn of early morning was breaking upon the scene, and the wind was falling rapidly. It looked as though there would be no great trouble making the land. But the sea was very heavy.

From under the lee of the wrecked yacht a giant roller, which had failed to burst upon the outer reef, foamed in a huge smother, and swept down upon the small boat. Smart had kept her head to the sea, and was allowing her to drift back very slowly, so that in case he saw a bad place he could pull out and away without turning around. The surge struck her and filled her half-full, but she rose again and rode safely. Men bailed for dear life.

In the growing light Smart saw the rise of the bank to leeward, and the sea falling heavily upon it. It was a most dangerous surf for a small boat. He stopped his craft, and lay heading the sea for half an hour, waiting for a chance to run in, and in the meantime the dawn came to reveal the desolate coral bank.

Smart stood up and looked about him. Not a sign of the whale-boat showed anywhere. His own craft was taking the sea heavily, and kept every one not rowing busy bailing. He saw it was no use waiting any longer, and began to go back into the surf.

Steering with one of the oars, he managed to keep the craft's head to the sea until they were in less than six feet of water. The bank being flat for nearly a mile to leeward of the yacht, the seas rolled foaming across it. He was within a quarter of a mile of the dry reef, which showed in the growing light, when a rolling sea caught the small boat and swerved her head a bit.

The next instant the steering-oar broke, and before the men rowing could swing her straight to the sea, she took the following one broadside and rolled over in the smother.

Smart had a vision of floundering men, women, and boat. The seas broke over his head and blinded him, strangled him, and seemed to hold him under. It was all white water, rolling foam, and it was almost impossible to breathe in it.

Then the sense of the danger dawned upon him with renewed force, and he struggled to where the dress of Miss Harsha showed upon the surface. He seized her, and dragged her to the upturned boat.

The major was already holding on to the keel, assisted by two men. Mrs. Dunn swam easily alongside, and grasped a line thrown her. The painter was passed along the keel and made fast to a ring-bolt aft. Then all hands held fast to this line, and waited for the sea to wash them in.

After an hour of struggling it became apparent that the boat was not nearing the shallow water fast enough. The tide was ebbing, and setting her out to

the deep water; carrying her to the heavy sea, where it would soon be impossible to live.

"If you will take Miss Harsha, major," said Smart, "you will be able to make a landing. Take two men with you, and swim her ashore before it's too late."

"I think I'll stay by the boat," said the major.

The girl was half-fainting.

"It's my duty to stay by the boat, Mrs. Dunn," said Smart, "but unless some one takes Miss Marion in, we'll lose her. I'm going to try for it."

Taking the ablest man to help him, Smart fastened a couple of the oars together, for an aid to float, and then started the struggle in through the surf.

It was a long, desperate fight through the broken water over the flat coral bank. Sometimes they would be able to touch the bottom, and then were swept from their feet again by the sea. Sometimes they would be gaining, and then the current, sweeping strongly out, would set them offshore until the fight seemed hopeless.

With the girl's head resting upon his shoulder, and the oars under his arms, Smart kept the struggle up. The sailor helped him, and finally they managed to get into water shoal enough to stand. Then they were aware of forms approaching along the shore, and they recognized the mate and his men who had gone in the whale-boat. In a few minutes willing hands dragged them to the dry land.

The mate's boat had been stove in, and this had kept him from coming back. He had made a success-

ful landing, but had failed to notice the other until a few minutes before he had sighted Smart in the breakers.

A glimpse of sunlight shot through the flying scud. The wind was slacking up and the sea going down very fast. The key they were upon was separated from the one with the light by a broad sheet of water. They were unable to reach any help from there.

While they gazed at the speck of the upturned boat, Smart rubbed the wrists of the fainting girl, and endeavoured to revive her.

The mate spoke up. "Seems like I see a boat coming around the key to the s'uthard," he said.

From the masthead of the *Sea-Horse*, Bahama Bill had seen the accident to the gig, and he was coming into the surf with a heavy boat, manned by a full crew of men who knew the reef. They watched him, and saw him pick up the survivors of the accident, one by one, and then row slowly in to where the rest of the yachting-party stood.

In a short time all were landed safely, and by the time they looked about them they were aware of the wrecking-sloop getting under way and running to leeward from her shelter. She rounded up to windward of the *Sayonara*, and dropped both anchors, paying out cable until she was close to the wreck. Then she signalled to the giant black, and he stood ready to take passengers aboard.

Dunn came forward and began to thank him for his heroism, but the black man looked over his head,

and just the faintest flicker of a sneer seemed to show upon his ugly face.

"Yo' think I make a good cook, eh?" he asked, with a leer. "I don't believe yo' need no washin' done fer a day er two. Git inter that boat wid de rest, an' thank me fer takin' yo', yo' gin-drinkin', whiskey-swillin' good-fer-nothin' white man." And Dunn did as he was bidden.

Aboard the *Sea-Horse* they were made as comfortable as possible. That afternoon, when the sea went down and the wind sank to a gentle breeze, the entire party were taken to the lighthouse in the pass, and arrangements were made to send them to Key West. The major was extremely cool and formal in his manner to all, but Mrs. Dunn cheered them the best she could.

Miss Marion Harsha paid some attention to Captain Smart, more than is usual to a yacht captain; but Smart appeared tired and unresponsive.

"You saved my life," said the girl indulgently, when they were alone at the lighthouse. "You saved me from a very disagreeable death — and I shall never be able to repay you. The major acted abominably. Won't you forget what I said at Key West?"

"Most certainly," said Smart, "but not what you meant. I was a fool — and paid the penalty. I'll go back to the liner to-morrow. There's a great difference between the way we've lived. It could never be forgotten. I forgive you with all my heart, and if you'll allow me, I'll kiss you good-bye."



The next day Smart and his owner — owner no longer, for his vessel was too badly wrecked to use again as a yacht — rowed out to get what personal belongings they wanted before starting for Key West. Upon the deck of the *Sayonara* stood the giant mate of the *Sea-Horse*.

“What yo’ want abo’d here?” asked the black man, as they came alongside.

“What d’ you mean?” asked Dunn smartly.

“Well, this here wessel was abandoned — left by her crew — an’ I be here to take charge,” drawled the black. “Yo’ cayn’t take nothin’ away from her without my permission. Ef yo’ want to make a deal wid the skipper, he’s abo’d de *Sea-Horse*. We generally claims two-third salvage. Yo’ kin make de deal wid him — see?”

Dunn didn’t see, but Smart finally convinced him of the truth. It was humiliating, but there was no help for it — it was the law.

“Right fine ship, cap’n,” leered Bahama Bill to Smart, after things were settled; “seems a shame to have to wrack her. Wouldn’t yo’ like a job as cook till yo’ git another berth?”

Later they towed her hull into Key West.

## IX

### The Survivor

"LIGHT dead ahead and close aboard, sir," said the mate in a tone of anxiety, as he poked his streaming sou'wester down the companionway.

Captain Johnson was bending over his chart, his parallel ruler placed firmly on east by south. The droning roar of the gale overhead and the booming of the storm canvas and taut standing rigging made the officer's voice sound strangely expressionless. The slight nervousness evident in the lowness of the tone was the only thing that made the master look up.

The swinging lamp cast a strong light upon the articles of his room, and as he took up his sou'wester and tied the strings under his chin, he caught a momentary glimpse of a photograph pinned over his desk. The wild rolling and plunging of the ship caused him to brace himself for a moment, and he stood with legs apart, swaying, to keep his balance. The picture was of his wife and children; those for whom he toiled at sea, and he thought of them the moment he made ready to go on deck. He was only a moment getting ready, for he had kept on his rubber boots and coat, but in that moment his thoughts went

to the home ashore. He loved those children, and he adored the woman who was their mother. They were all of his world ashore, and it was for that little world he worked and strove at sea.

In less than a minute after the mate had called he was on deck gazing through his night glasses at the light ahead. He was almost in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and the light was bright, the headlight of some steamer. Her side lights had not yet appeared through the drift and spume of the gale, but the headlight was bright and it was not changing its bearings, which was the bad sign that had worried the mate.

Johnson knew he had the right of way. Every man who knows anything of the rules at sea knows the sailing ship has the right of way over a steamer, and Johnson knew he was hove-to under storm canvas and must not give way or change his course. For him to get out of the steamer's way would put the burden of blame for anything that might happen upon himself, for it might confuse the steamer, which would, of course, at the right time shift her course and go clear.

But the light ahead grew brighter, and the moments were flying like the gale. The light was right over the jibboom end when the ship fell downward into the sea. Then it would swing to leeward a little, and then as the next sea swung her head off it would appear on the weather bow. Yes, it bore almost dead ahead and it was not changing its bearings.

The mate was getting nervous.

"Shall we keep her off, sir?" he asked.

"No, hold your course," came the order.

Ten men of the watch on deck had their eyes upon the light. They gave it small attention, however, for they knew, of course, that the steamer would sheer clear of them. The watch below and the passengers were sleeping as well as the rolling and plunging of the vessel would permit, and they were concerned not at all with lights. Those below in a ship know nothing of the strenuous life of those on deck.

"I can see his red light, sir," came the voice of the mate, strained and hoarse with excitement, and raised to a loud cry.

But Johnson could see the green light also, and he saw they were equally distant on either side of and below the bright eye which was bearing down upon them. The vessel was now close aboard, and of a sudden he felt his heart give a great bound under his ribs.

"Hard up the wheel," he roared. "Hard up, hard up — quick," and as he roared out he sprang to the spanker sheet and cast it off, letting the sail go to leeward with a thundering thrashing. Sharp cries came from forward where the men on lookout saw the danger and passed the word aft. And then as he turned, Johnson saw the giant bulk of a liner showing dimly through the gloom of the stormy night. A hundred little lights showed in her upper works. He even saw a man on her forecastle head peering forward, and

then the great black stem rose above him, and with a thundering crash and rushing roar it tore its way through his ship almost amidships.

For a moment which seemed an age, the great black side of the hull rose before his vision, grinding, smashing, tearing its irresistible way past. Then the great black demon of destruction drew away and faded into the gloom, leaving nothing but a boiling sea forward of where the mainmast had been. The next minute the wild sea of the Western Ocean closed over what had been a short time before a fine ship.

Johnson found himself facing a living hill which rose against the night sky. Above it a great comber roared and foamed down upon him as the top of the sea broke and fell downward along the slope. He was in the sea and the water was warm, warmer than the air had been when on deck. He had on his rubber boots and oilskins, and he wondered why he still floated. He had heard that men with boots on sank at once. He remembered this distinctly and he struck out strongly as the foaming crest of the comber swept over him and smothered him down into the blackness beneath. He kept struggling and his head came out into the night again. The wind swept over his face, driving the foam and spume so that he could not see or breathe, but he knew he was still upon the surface of the sea. He turned his back toward it and managed to get a little breath. Then, half blinded and strangling with the brine, he struck out again.

It suddenly occurred to him that the steamer would

stop and try to pick up the wrecked crew, but then he knew it would be impossible to lower a boat that night, and the masters of liners seldom stopped for anything. Transatlantic express steamers hardly ever stopped in good weather for a man overboard in daylight. Never unless they could see him distinctly upon the surface. If those upon the steamer could not see a four-masted schooner under storm canvas with her lights burning brightly, they would hardly hope to see a floating man who could not be seen ten fathoms distant by the sharpest eyes in that wind and sea. He tried to raise himself to see if the hull of the vessel was still in view, or if she were burning lights, but not even a Coston flare was visible. There was nothing save the desolate storm-lashed sea.

He had kicked off his rubber boots in a few moments, as they were dragging him down, and being a powerful man he struggled steadily to rid himself of his oilskins. Death had not made his appearance yet. He could not come upon a strong man so quickly while that man had his powers still left him to fight with. The very thought of the ending made him exert more power and a sudden realization of his position caused him to tear off his coat in a frantic effort. The faces of those he had left at home came before his half-blinded vision. He knew he was facing almost certain death, and that it would come quickly if no one picked him up. He was apparently alone in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and the steamer had kept on her course after completing the destruc-

tion of his ship. The rest of his crew must also have gone overboard. There were twenty-five souls all told, and he cursed the men of the steamer who had caused their sudden end. It had been vile carelessness. It had been more than brutal disregard for life. Their callousness amazed him, and he had been to sea many years and knew its heartlessness.

What would his family do without him? He could see their amazed and terrified looks when the news would be brought to them. His poor wife who adored him and whose only thought had been for him and the little ones. No, he could not die. No, no, by God, he would not die. He shook the water from his face and dashed it out of his eyes with his hand, and raised his head again for a look. The snoring roar of a comber sounded near, but even as he noted it he thought he heard the surging wash of something floating heavily in the sea. He knew there might be pieces of wreck about him. It was a chance and he flung himself high out of the water to see. The next instant the bursting wave fell over him and bore him down again into the blackness below. It seemed a long time it held him down, and he was exhausted when he got his head out again and drew in a mixture of water and air. A few more heavy seas and he would be very weak. The knowledge of it caused a terror within him. His heart began to beat rapidly. The end was really approaching in spite of his struggles. He was beginning to realize it, to realize that death could win after all.

But the thought of those ashore still steadied him. He must do his utmost. Had he been alone in the world the futility of his exertions would have been instantly apparent. He would have made a slight, ordinary effort, the effort of the animal who instinctively fears death, but his reason would have quickly told him that the sooner he went under the better it would be for him. He would have died like the twenty-five souls who had been in his care half an hour before. But he, no, he could not go, he would swim on, and on, and on.

He had been in the water half an hour now and he saw nothing but the house where his family lived. The sun was shining bright and the grass was green near the front gate. His wife stood upon the front steps and smiled at him. He reached toward her, but she seemed to recede and smile at him, leading him on, and on, and on.

He was still swimming but did not know it. His breath had gone to little choking gasps which hardly reached his half-filled lungs. His jaws were working spasmodically, clinching under the strain and opening to gasp out the briny mixture which he was forced to breathe. But always before his vision, before his blinded eyes, was that picture of his home. The whirling, choking blackness around him seemed to close in upon him. He stopped time and again to drive the drowning spray and spume from his face. He was drowning. The wind and sea were too heavy for a man to face for any length of time. The great comb-



ing crests of the seas swept over him, and it was only by that dogged, persistent effort to reach the vision before him that he managed to keep himself upon the surface after the smothering foam held him under. Once he seemed to realize his hopeless surroundings and raised himself out to the shoulders to try to see. He happened to be upon the lee slope of a hill of water and he got a momentary glimpse of the turmoil about him. All around was the gloom of the night, lit here and there by the white flashes of foam. It dawned upon his fading senses that he had reached the limit, he was going under, there was no hope.

Like the lamp that flares up before it dies, the flame of his life rose again in one more desperate resolve. He would keep on fighting, he would not go.

The pitiful futility of his struggle roused his expiring senses to a strange fury. He struck out fiercely, driving himself ahead before the wind and raising himself with each stroke. He sank into the hollow of a great sea, the slopes on either hand raised high above him and he was in a sheltered spot for a second. The surging wash of some heavy floating thing again came to his half-filled ears, and as he rose upon the crest he made a mighty effort. He raised himself and shook the water from his face. Right alongside of him lay a black object outlined by a white fringe of foam which now and then showed phosphorescent flares. He had been swimming now for more than fifty minutes.

With failing brain and cramping muscles he strove

for it, swimming, striking, reaching, the last expiring effort of a dying man who dies hard in the full powers of his manhood. His headway through the water was almost nothing. He was not a good swimmer. Few sailors can swim at all. A sea hurled him close to the object, and another swept him clear out of sight of it. Then one drove him against it heavily and he clutched frantically for a hand-hold.

When he set his fingers upon an edge about three feet above the surface he hung and rested. His senses were failing and he fought instinctively. Something within him seemed to tell him that he must get upon that object, that he must get clear of the water about him, and he rested before making the effort which must decide his fate. It was a high lift for an exhausted man and he set his strength slowly and persistently, hauling steadily with all his remaining energy. He managed to get his face level with the edge, but here he stopped. His head wobbled weakly with the surge of the sea. His eyes were closed and his jaws set. The sunshine seemed to play upon the green grass before him and the form of his wife stood beckoning. He sank an inch lower. A sea washed over him and he was slipping slowly back as it went past. He gave a choking cry, a strangling groan of despair and slipped down again into the sea just as a hand reached over the edge and closed upon his shirt collar.

The sun was shining and the wind-swept sea presented a beautiful aspect the following morning. The water broke over the lower edge of the deck-house'

upon which he lay, but only reached to his feet, foaming down the slant until it made a whirlpool in a mass of line which floated in a tangle. A line about his waist was made fast to a ring-bolt near him, and sitting alongside of him, with his head thrust forward peering out over the sea, was Garfinkle, his second mate.

An exclamation and their eyes met. Johnson raised himself to a sitting posture, though the pain in his cramped limbs made him groan.

"The forrad house, eh?" he said.

"Yessir," said the mate.

"You saved me?"

"Yessir, I just heard your call in time. You were done for, but were right within a foot of me. It was dark."

"No one else but us two?" asked the captain.

"All gone, sir, and it looks like we are going. There won't be another ship this way in a week. That was the West India liner, *Hammersea*, from Kingston to Liverpool, who ran us down. I saw the name on one of her boats that was torn off her. It was smashed up and floating close aboard us an hour ago."

"To run a man down is carelessness, but to leave him afterwards is murder," said Johnson with bitterness.

They were about six hundred miles from the Bahamas and to the eastward of the Stream. The water was warm and blue and the sea was going down. The easterly weather was dying out and the semi-tropical

warmth was taking its place. Near them several dark objects showed now and again upon the slopes of the seas, and they knew they must be débris from the sunken ship.

Johnson had probably not swam over twenty fathoms in the whole desperate endeavour he had made the night before. The darkness had prevented him from making any definite course and he had swum with the drift of the house. Garfinkle had been swept overboard with the wreck of the mainmast; the stem of the steamer had torn its way through the forward house, knocking it overboard. It was the only thing that had floated clear, for the spars were all stayed with steel rigging and the lanyards of the lee rigging had held against the shock although the mainmast had been driven out of her. The great spar had been dragged down with the sinking ship, but the house had floated clear and was resting upon its side. In the open doorway they could see clothes and sea-chests which had remained in the forecastle and which had not been washed out with the force of the sea.

They were weak and exhausted from the night of effort, but they went to work at a chest and dragged it through the door and upon the slanting side of the house. It sent the float down a good foot in the sea, but they persisted in the hope of finding something of value. The chest was almost empty. It contained a few clothes, a Bible and a large revolver, the cartridges still intact within the chambers. Johnson stuck the weapon in his waist-band, and his mate

placed the Bible and clothes clear of the sea. Then he kicked the chest adrift. It floated off, setting high upon the water and looking absurdly out of place.

"Nothing to eat — nothing to drink — looks pretty bad," said Garfunkle.

Johnson made no comment. He was grateful that he was still alive, and being a sailor he felt that it was a long way between that floating deck-house and drowning. He would get ashore again soon enough, and would not let his wife or children know how near he had come to passing. It would be simply a money loss. He had owned several shares in the schooner, and she had been a fine ship, paying twenty per cent., but he would get another and go on as before. If he ever caught up with the pilot of that steamer, he would see that the fellow gave an account of himself. His cargo had been insured fully, and the underwriters would make things hot for the rascal who had so ruthlessly run him down.

The first day passed without incident of importance. The pangs of hunger were beginning to be felt keenly by both men upon the float. Johnson was cheerful but Garfunkle was pessimistic and grumbled continually. He stood up every now and then to scan the horizon, but nothing broke the evenness of the dark blue rim.

The second day it was hot and calm. Both men took off their clothes and cooled themselves in the sea until a huge shadow rising alongside made them hasten up the slanting side of their float. A great tiger

shark rose at the edge of the house, and taking a shove, sent his broad nose up the slanting side until it almost touched their feet. Then he slid back again into the sea and swam slowly around the house, coming back again to the side that sloped into the water for another effort to get his prey. The men were more amused than frightened at his attempts. Garfunkle stripped a plank off the edge where it had been shattered, and at the monster's third effort he drove the ragged sharpened point deep into its eye. He floundered back into the sea and remained motionless some ten fathoms distant upon the surface. A smaller denizen of the same species came up and tried the same method, but he was rapped sharply over the head and he kept away. But as the darkness came on, the men realized that they must not relax their vigilance, for the hungry fish made other attempts to get them.

The morning of the third day Garfunkle was delirious. He raved about water and stood up oftener to scan the sea. Johnson was very weak, but kept his senses. He noticed a floating object near at hand and soon made out the sunken small boat torn from the steamer's side. As the morning wore on it drifted nearer and finally came alongside. He grasped the painter and managed to get the mate to give him a hand. Together they managed to drag the boat's bow up the slope of the float, and they saw that the plank at the stern just below the water-line had been smashed in. Weakened as he was, Johnson determined to patch it and accordingly set to work. By placing a piece of

the house planking on the outside and lashing it fast with the line, he managed to get the leak stopped sufficiently to allow the bailing of the craft. Then by getting into the stern, they kept the leak clear of the sea and the boat was safe enough. Searching through the locker aft, where the food for emergency was kept, they came upon the case of biscuit, water-soaked, to be sure, but still in partly solid shape. They ate some and felt better for a time, but their thirst was aggravated. The small water-breaker usually kept in life-boats was missing. Under the thwarts was a sail, and one oar was still fast in her bottom. Johnson cut the lashings and drew the gear out. It would be of service to them for a rudder.

The hunger pains had died away by the fourth day, but their thirst was terrible. A man may go for days upon water alone, but without it he can last only a short time under a warm sun. By keeping their bodies wet they eased themselves a little, but not much. The absorption through the skin was insufficient to do them much good. Time and again they seemed to see a ship bearing down upon them and one or the other would cry out, but after a while they desisted. The sea was a heaving plain as far as the sight could reach, unbroken by a single object. The deep blue turned to a deeper steel-gray nearer the horizon in the calm, meeting the almost cloudless sky in a haze. There was no wind, but they must get away. To remain any longer on the house was to invite a terrible death. It might be the same thing in the boat, but

they would at least feel that they were going somewhere, getting nearer to help and water.

It was water, always water. The liquid around them made the madness of thirst double. They had gazed down into the clear depths for hours, seeing visions of streams of fresh water, craving to plunge into them, the burning and all-consuming thirst in their throats waxing more and more intense. They had no longer any idea of hunger. The ship's bread they left untouched, for it was wet with salt water and the slightest bit of that liquid made them frantic. They could have just as well drunk pure alcohol.

Garfinkle was for starting off at once. He had become rational again, but his eyes held a certain light when they met the captain's that told of the madness in his brain. He always lowered them when Johnson looked at him, but he spoke always in a low, soft voice now, a sort of purring, and Johnson knew it was the purring of the famished tiger. Garfinkle was a big man and very powerful. He had risen to mate's berth as much by his physical abilities as mental. He was stripped to the waist, and his body, which he had kept wet, was burned to a bright red by the sun. The patch of hair on his broad chest showed in marked contrast to the surrounding skin. Johnson had kept his shirt on his back and saved himself the extra annoyance of the sun. He preferred to shiver a bit at night than to burn during the daytime.

When they had stepped the mast and made all ready for a start, they noticed some small fish swimming



close to the edge of the float. The dorsal fin of a large shark lay twenty fathoms distant upon the surface of the sea, and they wondered at the carelessness of the fish who ignored it. They seemed quite tame, and Johnson took the piece of wood they had used to keep off the sharks, whittled the end into a fresh point and lay at full length upon the house, his idea being to spear a few of the small fry and take them along for food. He was quite weak and his brain was dizzy. The exertion of mending the boat was exhausting and he made many ineffectual attempts to strike the fish without looking up.

Suddenly he was aware of a feeling of danger. He turned and saw Garfinkle stealthily coming upon him with the upraised oar. There was a wild look in the mate's eyes, but he grinned when Johnson turned and began a soft speech, half incoherent. Johnson was lying down, but managed to draw the pistol he had kept in his belt. The mate smiled, put the oar back into the boat and suddenly shoved her clear of the house, springing into her and sitting down upon a thwart.

Johnson looked at him, dazed, half understanding, his brain reeling in the sunshine.

"Come back," he said calmly.

Garfinkle grinned at him and grasped the sheet, hauled it aft and put the oar over the stern for a rudder. There was no wind and the boat remained motionless. The mate began to scull away slowly.

"Come back," said Johnson in a low tone.

The mate turned his back upon him and as the boat's head payed off, kept her on her course to the westward.

"Come back," said Johnson again.

The boat drew slowly off. She was ten fathoms before Johnson realized that he was being deserted. Garfunkle sculled her slowly, the sail slatting with the roll of the sea.

Johnson still held the revolver. It came upon him suddenly that he was being left, that he was lost. The vision of the home ashore flashed before him, the green grass and white cottage, with his smiling wife and romping children. He was being left to die.

He drew the hammer of the revolver back and raised the weapon, letting the front sight stop full upon the middle of Garfunkle's back between the shoulders. He hesitated, and as he did so he remembered that the man had saved his life but a few days before. He would have drowned but for the rescuing grip which hauled him upon the house. He let the weapon sink until its muzzle touched the planks, and he put his left hand to his head to try to help his reeling brain to reason properly. No, he could not die. The vision of the home ashore came stronger to him. It was not for himself alone that he would live, but live he must, and would.

The sights of the pistol settled again upon the back of his mate. He was twenty fathoms distant and drifting slowly away. Johnson pressed the trigger.

The report jarred him. The puff of smoke disap-

peared at once into the air, and he saw Garfunkle look around and grin. Then the mate stood up, reeled, staggered, and plunged headlong overboard. He saw him no more.

Without waiting an instant Johnson swam toward the craft and managed to gain her. He had forgotten about the sharks, but nothing struck him. He took the oar the mate had dropped in the water alongside, and after he climbed aboard he trimmed the sheet and settled himself in the stern, making the oar fast in a becket. If he let go of it now he would not lose it. The sun was in the west and he headed away, steering as near as he could guess for the Bahamas.

The wrecking sloop *Sea-Horse* was coming along up the coast and the captain, Sanders, of Key West, noticed something floating upon the broad stretch of sea which looked like a small white boat. Boats were not met with so far off shore, and the object sat so low in the water and appeared without control that the skipper of the wrecker called his mate.

"What d'ye make of that, Bill?" said he, pointing to the white speck.

Bahama Bill, the huge negro diver and wrecker, looked long and intently at it.

"'Pears to me like it was er wrack, cap — what? Looks to be a stove-in boat, an' I reckon we might as well pick her up — maybe we kin fix her to be ob use wid a little paint and putty. Ennyways, we kin sell her to some dub in Miami en clar enough fo' de trouble — what yo' say, cap?"

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"Oh, let her head up to it if you want to," said Sanders. "I don't like running out of my line when I'm in a hurry, but if you want her, get her. I reckon we might pass her off for a few dollars — stand by the main sheet."

"Ship's boat — yassir, dat's a ship's boat fo' shuah, cap," said the giant mate as the wrecking vessel drew nearer. "Must be some ob de wrack hereabouts — we better lay by en take a look eround, yassir."

"Let her luff a little," called Sanders to the man at the wheel. "Steady — so, let her go, jest so — steady — Good God! What — There's a man in her —"

"Stand by de jib sheet," roared Bahama Bill. "Yo' kin let her come to when yo' ready, sah — I'll stand by toe ketch him, sah."

The huge mate leaned far over the side of the *Sea-Horse* and with a mighty grip seized the floating small craft by the gunwale. She was half full of water, but he sprang into her and passed up her painter to a man on deck while the wrecking sloop plunged and bucked into the sea, her sails slatting and switching as she lay right in the wind. In a moment the mate had lifted the body and passed it aboard and the half-sunken small boat was dropped astern.

They poured water between his sun-baked lips and upon his swollen, livid tongue. In a few hours the corpse showed signs of life, but the blue-black face was motionless for days, and they had reached Jacksonville before the man's features relaxed enough for

him to speak. He could not make himself understood, and it was three weeks later, when he was able to sit up in the cot at the seaman's hospital, before he could tell of his affair.

He was discharged as cured and went to his home. He had heard nothing from his wife and supposed she had heard nothing concerning him. When he entered the gate he noticed that all was silent about the place. A neighbour accosted him and asked who he was, but he was put out at the delay and refused to tell his business. Then the man told him how the news had come in that he had gone down in his ship nearly a month ago and that his wife had failed and died within a week.

He listened silently, and when the man finished he went into the house.

They found him dead that evening with a bullet-hole between the eyes.

"Crazy with grief," said the neighbours who knew his home life. The doctor who examined him thought differently.

"There is absolutely nothing abnormal about him," said the physician. "He looks like a man who has gotten tired out — clean exhausted with the futility of some great effort — look at his face."

## X

### On the Great Bahama Bank

STORMALONG JOURNEGAN was a Conch, a native of the Bahamas. He stood six feet four inches upon his thin spindle-shanks, and it is doubtful if he ever weighed more than one hundred pounds; no, not even when soaking wet. He was thin.

He lit up for the night, wiped the bar free from the gin and bitters spilled there by a drunken customer, and then turned to survey his room, waiting for the whistle of the liner. It was the night the ship was due, the giant New York mail liner, ten thousand tons and not less than three hundred passengers. All of these would be thirsty, for the weather is always warm in Key West in the early spring.

Journegan was a "spouter." That is, he had been with a religious bunch of reefers, and he was free to make use of the Scriptures — too free entirely to suit the orthodox ecclesiastics of Key West. Over the sign of "The Cayo Huesso" the legend ran thus: "As it was in the beginning, it is now," showing that Journegan was not a reformer at all, but believed in the Bible and the true creed. And the worst of it all was that he was accurate in his quotations; not only

accurate, but invincible and gifted with that terrible weapon — an unfailing memory.

“ Why do you use such blasphemy? ” asked a divine, shocked at the sign and its motto.

“ I was taught that there creed by a better man than you, suh, and he said: ‘ As it ware in the beginning, it is now, an’ ever shall be, world without end. Amen.’ I heard ye say them same words onct when I ’tended meetin’. What ye got agin’ ’em, hey? ”

“ Nothing at all — nothing at all.”

“ Then cl’ar out. Git erlong. Don’t come makin’ no trouble fer me. I don’t ask ye to drink — git away.”

“ Yes, sir,” went on Journegan, turning to an approaching customer. “ It’s the same now as it always ware — same as it ware in the beginning — always shall be just the same — human nature never changes, not at all. There’ll always be the bad, and always be the good. The bad are the strong gone wrong. The good are the weak tryin’ to make good; sometimes they’re strong too, but very seldom. Strength and goodness don’t go together except in rare cases, but when a good man’s strong, he’s sure nuff strong.

“ Ye see, we’ve all got a livin’ to make. We hire men to study religion for us and pay ’em to preach it out of pulpits — yes, sir, actually pay ’em to git up and preach about th’ Gospel as if you or me couldn’t read or write! What’s the sense? What’s the sense of paying a man for doing something you can do yourself just as well? If salvation depends on a fellow’s

ability to translate the Gospel, then it's a mighty poor Gospel for poor folk — but it don't. It's a good livin' they make preachin', and I for one don't take no offence at a feller chargin' for his talk; not that he knows any more than you or me — 'cause he can't know a blame bit more — but we've all got to live, an' the feller what talks has to live, too. Let him live by talk. Let me live by sellin' things. I don't ask no favours, but I don't want no guy what jest talks an' talks fer money to come around an' bother me — that's all; yes, that's erbout all, I reckon."

You will see that Journegan was very popular with the strong men who worked and very unpopular with the men who preached.

"Your head is as long as your body," admitted Captain Smart, entering the gilded hall. "What you say goes, Stormalong — gimme a drink."

"Goin' to meet the ship?" asked Journegan.

"Yep, I'm goin' back in her if I get the chance," said Smart. "I've been on the beach here a week now. Dunn settled up his wrecking bill with that fellow 'Bahama Bill' and Captain Sanders and their gang, and that lets me out. I'm out a good berth. She was a fine yacht."

"'Twasn't your fault you lost her, I heard tell," said Journegan, with a leer.

"I did all I could," admitted Smart, "but I lost her, just the same. There is no excuse for the loser, you know."

"Yep, I knows well enough," said Journegan



slowly, as if thinking over something. "'Peared to be leakin' badly all o' a sudden-like, hey?"

"Yes, started to leak during the blow, or just before it. A bit of hard luck you may say."

"Well, you'll know more about the reef if you stay here a while."

There was some strange meaning in Stormalong's tone, and it was not lost on Smart.

"You are the second man who has said something to that effect," said the seaman. "Now, what the devil do you mean by it?"

"Oh, nothing much. No use getting worked up by what I said. You don't know much about the ways of folk along the reef and bank. That's all — there goes the whistle of the liner."

A deep-toned siren roared out over the quiet waters of the reef, sounding far away to sea, and seemed to be coming from some distant point to the southward. Smart recognized it as the call of his ship, the ship he had left months before for the sake of a woman.

He drank off his liquor and started for the dock, making his way along the white roadway and joining the throng of Conchs who lazily walked toward the shore to see the great liner make her landing. She was a new ship, a ship of huge tonnage for a Southern liner, and it was a treat to watch her officers dock her. Slowly she came drifting in toward the land, her mighty engines sending the white coral water moving gently from her stern.

Her giant bows came near the landing. A tiny figure flung a filmy line through the air, a line so small in proportion to her great bulk that it seemed but a spider-web. But behind it followed a great hawser, and a dozen lazy black men hauled it ashore and threw the loop over a pile-end.

Then a shrill whistle sounded, and the deep rumble of the engines told of the backing strain. She swung alongside the wharf finally and made fast her stern and spring-lines. Then a gangway shot out, and the captain came quickly down, followed by a swarm of passengers.

As the ship was to stop only a half-hour at Key West, her commander had to make a quick clearance and entry, taking on some fifty passengers who were in the cigar business and who made Key West an important stop on that account. They were all through first-class to New York. Smart joined Captain Flanagan while he walked briskly toward the customhouse. The skipper shook his hand warmly, and asked how he came to be down there. Then followed the story of the wreck of a yacht, and the tale of an officer out of a berth, all of which Flanagan listened to with waning interest. The old, old story was uncommonly dull to him. He was powerless to do anything, and he spoke forth.

"It's no use of talking about it any more, Smart. You know the rules of the company as well as I do. You know there are other men waiting to step into berths, and when a man steps out like you did it's up

to him to stay out and give the rest a chance. How would you like to have a man come back into a ship and block you for perhaps twenty years? No, it won't do, even if I could do it. You are out. Stay out, unless you want to start in again at the foot, as a third mate."

"No, I can't drop to that position at my age," said Smart sadly. "I'm holding a master's ticket, and if you can't take me on as second at least, why, all right. I'll have to ship somewhere else."

"I'm mighty sorry, old man," said Flanagan, "but you know it's not my fault. It's the rules of the company, and if I took you on to New York you would be dropped as soon as we landed. I can give you a passage up, if you want it. Here's a key to the state-room — take it."

"No, you don't. If I stay ashore, I stay right here. Don't worry about me. I'll try to make good. I know I was a fool, but sometimes we all play the fool. Good-bye, and good luck. How does the ship run?"

Flanagan was gone. The light of Stormalong's shone out brightly in the distance. Smart kept his eyes upon them for a long time, and wandered about the streets. The warning whistle of the liner blew for a farewell, and as the sound roared out upon the night the seaman turned away and went up the street.

## II

Captain Smart was in a particularly uncomfortable mood. He had left the liner for a woman, a woman

whom he desired and whom he thought worth any sacrifice. Later he discovered that she was selfish to the core. He had expected companionship, love, and sympathy. He had found cold, calculating animalism: a brutality all the more horrible for its refinement, for its servitude to wealth and position. Yes, she had told him plainly just how she felt about it, and had made it perfectly plain that she would mate only with some one who could place her in surroundings which she desired, not what she would get as the wife of a seaman, a captain of a ship. And he could not blame her. No, it was manifestly not her fault. It was the fault of the society in which she had been brought up. It had stifled the woman in her and developed the snob to an extent that would admit of no choice on the part of either.

He had seen his mistake, and the loss of the yacht upon which she was a guest had given him a chance to complete the affair, to get away from all the familiar surroundings. Now he was "on the beach."

"On the beach," to a sailor means without a ship and without money. Smart had neither ship nor money, but he had a strong constitution and high spirits, and the lights of Stormalong's were still burning brightly down the long, smooth road.

He entered and noticed that the tables were full. A company of men were playing cards at the farthest end of the saloon, and he made his way toward them. A game of poker always fascinated him, and he hung over the back of a player, watching his cards and not-

ing the manner he threw away a high pair to fill a flush.

"Would ye like to set in?" asked Stormalong, who had come over to get an order for drinks.

"I wouldn't mind setting in for a short time," Smart nodded. "No all-night séance for me, and quit when you want to."

"Gents," began the saloon-keeper, "this is Captain Smart, of the schooner — ah, well, never mind that, hey? Well, Smart was chief officer of the ship just gone out. He's got the dough, and kin play a keard or two, if you give him a chance."

"Set right in here, cap," said a thick-set, sunburnt man whose calling was manifest in his face. "I'm a reefer, an' run a sponger, but I reckon I kin play with yer."

"You make five — just right for luck," was the greeting of another, a thin, eagle-nosed fellow who declared that his name was Smith — Wilson Smith.

A man with a thick growth of beard nodded to him across the board, and a squat, twinkling-eyed little fellow, with the hue of the tobacco factory upon him, held out his hand. "My name's Jacobs — traveller for the Garcias' — glad to meet you."

The cards were dealt round afresh, and Smart took up his hand. For some time nothing occurred to distract the attention of the players from the game, but gradually their talk and the clink of money as they made change attracted the crowd.

Smart was aware of a huge form just behind him,

and, glancing up, he looked right into the face of Bahama Bill, the black mate of the wrecking-sloop *Sea-Horse*. A huge grin was upon the black man's ugly face, and he laid his enormous hand upon Smart's shoulder. "Huh, how yo' is, cap? Thought you'd gone away fo' sho. Stopped to teach 'em how toe play de game, huh? Yah, yah, ya-a-a!"

"Stormalong," broke in Wilson Smith, "I don't want to appear rude, but I draw the colour line sometimes, especially at keards. If the big nigger standing behind us will sit down or move along, it'll facilitate the game some."

Bahama Bill heard the remarks, but, being in a white man's saloon, he said nothing. He showed his teeth in a mirthless smile, a smile which boded no good for the man who had spoken and who was evidently a stranger to him.

Stormalong motioned to the wrecker to sit down, and Bill did so without comment. He was well known and fairly well liked, and his record allowed him some privileges which were not accorded to men of his race. Being part owner as well as mate of the wrecking-sloop made him a person of more or less note. Therefore Stormalong furnished him with unlimited rum, which he paid for from a wad of bills which made the observers gaze with surprise. Mr. Dunn, the owner of the yacht which Smart had lost, had been trimmed very cleanly. The salvage on her had been large for so small a vessel, owing to the valuable silverware, furnishings, and other fittings.

III

The game progressed slowly, but Wilson Smith began to win little by little. Smart suddenly found he held three aces. He raised the limit before drawing, and discarded two cards, hoping to draw another ace. Jacobs, the cigar man, came in, and Smith raised it one better, which Smart made good, the other two men dropping out.

Bahama Bill had drunk several glasses of rum by this time, and he again appeared to fix his attention upon the game, but not so as to attract attention, standing well back of all but keeping his eyes fixed in a steady gaze upon the thin-faced man's cards.

The cards were dealt, and Smart drew a pair of queens, filling, and thus holding a strong hand. Jacobs drew one card, and quietly slipped it into his hand. His face was emotionless, and he puffed lazily at his cigar, complacently cocked up at a high angle in his jaws. Smith drew four cards, and, after conning his hand carefully, bet a dollar.

Jacobs raised, and Captain Smart came upon him for the limit. Wilson Smith, to the surprise of all, raised back the limit. The cigar man was game, and came again. Smart holding an ace-full, could not, of course, let it pass him, so he again raised it.

"We all bein' so mighty peart about our hands — let's throw the limit off," suggested Smith.

"I'm more'n willin'," agreed Jacobs. "What d'ye say, cap?"

"I haven't much money" — Smart hesitated — "and just came in the game to pass the time, but if the rest are willing, I'll stay."

Wilson Smith looked around approvingly. "I'll make it fifty dollars better than what there's in it." He drew a cigar from his pocket and lit it with an easy air.

"I'll have to make it two hundred better," Jacobs protested grimly. "I hate to gamble, but I can't let a hand like this pass me."

"Oh, I haven't any money like that." Captain Smart's brows were raised in surprise. "Fifty is all I can show."

"Well, I'm sorry about that," said Jacobs. "Of course we'll give you a show, but the limit was put off on purpose to let us play keards."

Smart was aware of a heavy hand upon his shoulder. He turned, and found Bahama Bill standing close to him.

"Take dis hear, cap." And Bill thrust an enormous roll of bills unto his pile upon the table. "I'll stand by toe see yo' through."

Wilson Smith looked up again, and then called for Stormalong Journegan.

"Journegan," said he, "this is the second time I have had to speak to you about being annoyed. If it happens again there'll be trouble."

"Play poker," came a voice from the crowd.

Smart gazed about him for a moment. It was evident that the mate of the *Sea-Horse* had an object in



putting up his cash. He was quick-witted enough to see that it was best to go ahead without making any comment. He could stop after this hand.

Bahama Bill drew back at a sign from Journegan, but still fixed his gaze upon Smith's hand. It seemed as though he had seen the hands of the men, and was betting upon the best. Smart could think of no other reason for the money being left him, and he felt certain that he would win. Bill was just backing the hand he had seen to be the winner.

As long as that was the case he would go the limit. He counted out five hundred dollars and laid it upon the table. Then he picked up his cards again and skimmed over the squeezers, waiting for the end.

Jacobs drew out the amount to make good, and the thin-faced man felt in his pocket for his roll. He bent over in doing this, and as he did so he held his cards close to his breast in his left hand. He was still fumbling in his trousers pocket with his right when a black hand suddenly reached over his shoulder and drew forth a complete "hold-out" from under his waistcoat where his hand pressed. The movement was so quick, so powerful, and so disconcerting, that for an instant there was a silence, and the fellow threw up his head. The next moment he had drawn his gun, a long, blue-barrelled revolver of heavy pattern, and had swung it up over his shoulder and fired like a flash of lightning into Bahama Bill.

Instantly there was an uproar, and above the noise of the struggling mass of men there sounded the bull-

like bass of the mate of the *Sea-Horse*: "I got yo' fer sho, Skinny Ike — I got yo'."

## IV

Captain Smart grabbed what money he could get hands upon, and while thus engaged the cigar man dealt him a powerful blow over the shoulders with a chair. It had been meant for his head, but instead it landed upon the heavy muscles Smart had earned by hard work hauling lines. He gave a yell, and sprang upon his assailant. Just then Stormalong Journegan opened with his gun, and the quick firing drowned all other sounds.

Through the smoke of the fight Smart saw his man, and smote him with all his power upon the jaw. The fellow went down and out. Many of the bystanders had been with the crooks, probably a gang of six or more, and these fell upon Smart and Bahama Bill.

Smart found himself fighting two quick, agile fellows who struck at him with weapons he could not distinguish. The rest piled upon the giant mate while Journegan fired upon the bunch, taking care not to hit any one, for he had no desire to ruin his business. His lead, however, went so close that one man got a clip that knocked him over. The room filled with smoke, and the uproar was loud enough, but suddenly Smart was aware of the giant Conch struggling to his feet and swinging out right and left with two mighty fists, sending men tumbling about like chips before a storm. Just beneath him the thin-faced man, Wilson

Smith — dubbed “Skinny Ike” by Bill — lay in a heap.

“Come on, yo’ muckers, come on an’ git yo’ medicine,” he bawled. Then he picked up the prostrate man, and, taking him by the shoulders, used him as a flail, swinging him about his head and knocking every one in his path into a state of submission. The men around Smart fled in confusion, and in a moment Bahama Bill and the captain stood alone in the end of the room, the rest of the onlookers making good their escape to the street. Journegan stood behind his bar and grinned down the barrel of his empty gun.

“Air ye hurted much, Bill?” he asked.

“Hurt!” roared the giant mate. “What’d hurt me here, anyway, ’cept yo’ blamed rum, hey?”

“Well, if you want to make a git-away now’s the time, I reckon, for this place’ll be pulled to-night sure — an’ that in a mighty few minutes.”

Bahama Bill dropped the limp form of Wilson Smith. The man was not seriously hurt, only horribly bruised. The rest were either insensible from blows or unable to rise from the smash of the thin fellow’s body upon them, for the mate had stove them hard enough to break ribs and arms with his human whip. Some of the gang essayed to sit up and take notice after the mate ceased to speak. One had the temerity to draw a gun, which Bill unceremoniously kicked out of his hand.

“I reckon we’d better be goin’ ’long, cap,” said the

big black. "This place'll be pulled by the marshal inside o' ten minutes. Take up w'at dough you sees; I'll kerlect it off'n you later."

"Didn't you git a plug?" asked Journegan.

"Oh, yas; jest a little hole in de shoulder — dat's nothin'. Come on, cap."

Smart hesitated a minute. "Where do we go?" he asked.

"Aboa'd de *Sea-Horse* — an' to sea as fast as we kin git her movin'. Ought toe been gone befo' dis, but when I see dat Skinny settin' in to skin yo', I jest naterally had toe take a hand. Whatcher s'pose I handed yo' dat money fer?"

"But I haven't done anything wrong — nothing to run for," said Smart.

"Yo' try an' think straight a minute, cap. Yo' ain't got many friends here. Take my advice an' don't git pulled. De clink is mighty mean here. I don't know why I should take a shine toe yo', cap, but yo' shore did set in dat game ter win — an' yo' kin hit pretty straight, too."

"Gwan, before it's too late," said Journegan.

A rush of feet sounded in the street, followed by the hoarse voices of men nearing "The Cayo Huesso." The door of the saloon was suddenly burst open, and the marshal, with a posse of twenty men behind him, came into view.

"De window, cap," yelled Bahama Bill, and without waiting a moment he sprang through, carrying the sash and glass, shutters, and all with him.

Through the opening Smart plunged instinctively, and as he did so he heard the sharp command to halt, followed by the crack of a gun. He had managed to get clear by a fraction of a second, and, landing upon his feet, started after the dark shadow which he knew was the black sailor making for the beach.

v

Down the road Captain Smart ran as fast as he could go, trying vainly to reach the tall form of the mate, who kept the lead easily until the lights of the harbour came into view. Then he slacked up and Smart came up with him.

"Dat sho was fun, hey?" laughed the mate, not the least winded from his dash for liberty. "Cost yo' a hundred dollars to git clear ef dey catch yo'. Dey don't run yo' in fer fun down here. Dat's de *Sea-Horse*. Git inter dat small boat — so."

"How about Journegan? Will they fine him for the fracas?"

"Oh, no. He stands in wid de gang — pays fer de trouble he makes. Journegan is a good man — he's all right."

"He was with the crooks, was he?" asked Smart.

"Oh, yes, he thought you had money — he has to stand in wid de gang. He was mad as er hornet at me buttin' in, but jest couldn't help it. I'll square him some day, an' he knows it. If he didn't know it, he'd 'a' plugged me when dey jumped me. I reckon he c'u'd 'a' done it, all right, for he's a mighty fine shot,

dat Journegan. But I sho had it in fer Skinny Ike — he done me onct.”

“ Seems like a pretty tough bunch of men along the bank here, don’t it? ” said Smart. “ Journegan hinted that there was something done wrong to Mr. Dunn’s yacht — he said she must have leaked — what? ”

Bahama Bill stopped rowing the small boat. They were half-way to the *Sea-Horse*, and lights were already showing along the shore, telling plainly that pursuit would be made in short order. The tide set them toward the vessel, but Bill gazed steadily at Smart through the darkness.

“ Did Journegan say dat? ” he asked quietly.

“ Yes, and I would like to know what he meant by it.”

“ You know why he did all dat shootin’ — all dat firin’ to hit nobody? Dat was jest to get the place pulled — pulled before you made a gitaway, toe git your money. He knowed you an’ me were enemies — knowed dat yo’ had it in fer me, knowed dat I wrecked Mr. Dunn’s yacht, an’ dat yo’ sho had no claim wid me — an’ dat’s where he made a mistake — ”

“ You wrecked the schooner? ” cried Smart.

“ Sho, cap, I dun wrecked her. Don’t yo’ remember de day — de night — I came abo’d, harpooned by a fool Yankee mate? Well, I was pullin’ a seam dat night — dat’s what made her leak — ”

“ You are a devil — the blackest rascal I ever met.

You can take me ashore, I won't have anything more to do with you — turn about."

"Not a bit — no, suh. Yo' goes wid me dis trip, sho."

Smart hesitated not a moment, but sprang overboard and struck out for the shore, calling loudly for help.

Bahama Bill sat gazing after him for a moment, swearing deeply. Then he carefully shipped the oars, stood up, and the next moment plunged over the side after him. In a few rapid strokes he came up to the sailor. With one mighty arm he circled the swimmer, holding his arms to his sides as easily as though he were a child. With his other hand he struck out lustily for the sloop and gained her side, where two heads peered over looking at him.

"Pass a line, quick," he called.

A line dropped instantly over the side and fell within reach. Smart was quickly trussed and hoisted aboard and the mate climbed up after him.

"Put de mains'l on her — heave her short — jump!" bellowed Bahama Bill, at the same time casting off the gaskets from the boom and throwing the beackets off the wheel.

A Dutchman, Heldron by name, and a Conch called Sam, sprang to obey. The sail went quickly up with a clucking of blocks and snapping of canvas. Then in came the anchor, the three men hauling line with a will. One man loosed the jib while another sent it up with a rush, and just as the sweeping strokes of

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a pursuing oar fell upon their ears the *Sea-Horse* stood out the nor'west passage and to sea.

"Where's Sanders?" asked the mate.

"Oh, de cap'n, he dun take de mon' he get an' go to Tampa on de steamer this night. He say he goin' to do somet'in' to dem big hotels Mr. Flagler builds — dem dat run de gamblin'-houses. Won't be back fer a week."

"Cap," said Bahama Bill, casting Smart adrift, "yo' kin go below an' put dat money in de co'ner of de right-han' locker — no use yo' tryin' to swim away wid it. Yo' an' me is goin' to the Bank fer a bit o' work — dat's it, Sam, hook de boat as we come past — pass de painter aft, an' let her tow."

Smart saw that he was caught fair enough. To resist was only to make more trouble. He was broke, anyway, and without a berth. He might just as well try wrecking for a change — why not? Yes, he would go below and turn in without more ado. He had forgotten the money he had taken from the game at Journegan's, the money which belonged to the mate of the *Sea-Horse*. No wonder Bahama Bill had jumped in after him and brought him aboard. It was easy to see that in spite of all Bill's apparent carelessness he took no chances as he saw them. The *Sea-Horse* was standing out, and there was no chance of spending the night in the lockup. After all, it was pleasanter out here in the brisk sea air, even in the company of such men. He went slowly below.



"Turn in the po't bunk, cap," came the mate's big voice down the cuddy.

Smart did so, and he fell asleep while the wrecking-sloop rose and plunged into the short sea.

VI

"I reckon we're about dar, cap. Dem masts stickin' up yander air de fo' an' main' o' de brig *Bulldog*. We skinned her clean, took a share ob de salvage, an' cleared fo' town." Thus spoke Bahama Bill, resting one hand upon the wheel-spokes to hold the *Sea-Horse* and sprawling upon the deck. The sloop was approaching the edge of the Great Bahama Bank, and the shoaling water told of the coral bottom.

"Well, what are you going to stop here for, then?" asked Smart. Although he had decided to cast in his lot with Bahama Bill temporarily he was averse to wandering about on the old *Sea-Horse* for any length of time. He was anxious to hunt a berth as navigator upon some ship of size. Nassau was close at hand, not fifty miles away, and there were many ships stopping there.

"I'll tell yo', cap — I'll tell yo' jest what I want yo' to do fer me," said the big black. He rounded the sloop to, and Sam let go the anchor, while the Dutchman Heldron hauled down the jib.

The *Sea-Horse* dropped back with the sweep of the current and wind, until she lay just over the mainmast of a sunken brig, which stuck out of the water at a slant, the top coming clear some twenty feet to port

of her. The wreck was lying upon her bilge and heeled over at a sharp angle, the partners of the mainmast being about ten feet below the surface.

"I heard yo' tell Stormalong Journegan you'd been down in a diving-suit, de kind dey use in de No'th — hey? Yo' know about rubber suits an' pumps?" He looked keenly at Captain Smart while the seaman told him that he had heard aright. He had been in suits, and helped others diving in them. He thought he knew something about air-pumps.

The mate went below forward, and shortly came on deck with a complete rubber diving-suit, helmet, and weighted shoes.

"I don't go in much fer dis kind ob divin'," said he, "but I dun paid a fellow a hundred dollars fer de whole suit. Show me how to work it, an' show me how dat pump works. Ef yo' do, we'll go halves — break even — on what I think is below in dis hear wrack. I knowed yo' must know something erbout divin' — dat is, erbout rubber divin', which ain't divin' at all, but dat's what I want ter know."

"I thought you said the wreck was finished with?" Smart commented.

"All de money, all de coin was got out ob her, yas, suh, dat's all straight, but dishar wrack ain't been under water more'n a few months, an' I been thinkin' dat maybe some hard work would tell on some cases of ammunition left in her."

"What did she have?"

"Rifles, money, and provisions for Vensuela —

some ob dem revolutionists had de charter. Dey took up de rifles, and dey took up de money, but dey left a lot ob ammunition in her, sayin' it ain't no good. Well, suh, I got a hole in mah shoulder where one ob dem bullets came troo — yo mind de little fracas at Stormalong's. I dun sold a feller a dozen boxes ob dem ca'tridges, de onliest .45's in Key West. Dat's de reason I cum to know somethin' about dem. Ef dey kin mak' a hole in me, dey kin mak' a hole in mos' enny one, I reckon — hey, what?"

"I see," said Smart. "And that's the reason you wanted me to help you out? You want me to help dive for the goods. How much is there — and how were they put up? They won't stay for ever any good under water, you know."

"Dey were put up in tins too big to handle, goin' naked like I dives. De cases were mighty big, an' I don't care much erbout smashin' 'em up wid de 'tarnal things ready to go off. I knows where dey is — way back in de lazarette 'way back aft, an' I knows dat dere's erbout a millun ob dem."

Smart had been overhauling the suit and found it to be in fair condition. Evidently some hard-up diver had sold out to Bahama Bill, who always went naked as deep as three or four fathoms, and could stay long enough under to do the ordinary work required of divers upon vessels on the reef. He could make two or three minutes' work at short intervals, and being a mighty man, the strain told upon him very little indeed.

The rubber part of the suit was just about right for a man of Smart's build. It would not begin to go upon the giant frame of Bahama Bill. The great mate of the wrecker very well knew it, and he knew also that he could never get any of his men to go down in it. They knew nothing about such gear, and the very sight of it filled them with dread. It was up to Captain Smart to make the effort, if effort there was to be made.

In the meantime Bahama Bill would go down once or twice to locate the place in the wreck to work upon. It would require careful work not to explode the cases in blowing out a hole in the bilge to make an entry; further, it was impossible to think of going down the hatchway aft, for the distance was too great.

It was upon this vessel that the mate of the *Sea-Horse* had had trouble before, being chased into her by a shark and barely escaping with his life. He knew her pretty well, and could locate the ammunition in a couple of dives. After that Smart could take his time in four fathoms and work the stuff out to hoist aboard, using as little dynamite as possible.

"How about the pump?" asked Smart, after he had overhauled the suit.

The machine was brought on deck. It was dirty and much out of order, but after an hour's work he had it so it could be relied upon for the shallow water. For greater pressure than four fathoms he would not have cared to test it with himself upon the bottom.

While he was refitting it the mate stripped and

stood upon the rail ready for the plunge. The water was clear and the bottom could plainly be seen, the varicoloured marine growths making it most beautiful.

Bahama Bill dropped outboard, and went down with a plunge so light that he hardly disturbed the surface. The others, watching, saw him swim rapidly down under the bends of the wrecked ship, leaving a thin trail of bubbles.

He was only down a few moments this dive, and came rising rapidly to the surface, his ugly face showing through the clear liquid, his eyes wide open and gazing upward.

"Gimme a piece ob chalk, Sam," he said, as he came into the air again.

A piece was handed him, and he went below again and marked the spot where the hole would be blown in the vessel's side, and in the meantime Smart donned the diving-suit.

The Dutchman Heldron had never even seen a suit of this kind before, and his messmate Sam gazed at it with a sort of superstitious dread.

"Yo' sure ain't goin' under in that outfit, cap?" he protested, as Smart put on the shoes weighing fully twenty pounds apiece. "Man, them slippers will sure hold you to the bottom!"

"I guess you dummies will have sense enough to haul me up when I pull the line and signal," remarked Smart. "Now, give me the helmet and screw down these bolts." He had the head-piece on by the time

Bahama Bill came on deck and surveyed the proceedings.

"I'll have to trust you to tend the lines," said Smart to the black giant. "Remember, now, one strong pull and you haul me up — not quickly unless I give three quick pulls afterward. Two pulls is to slack away, one on the hose is to give me more air, and two to give me less. Understand?"

Bahama Bill wiped the water out of his bleary eyes and nodded. He apparently had some misgivings about the concern, but he was far too careless of human life to express them. He coupled up the air-hose and started the pump, and the whistling inside the helmet told of the wind coming in behind the diver's head.

Smart held the front glass ready, and after being satisfied that the machine was working, he had Sam screw it on and Captain Smart was cut off from the wrecker's crew, his face showing dimly through the thick glass plate. The heavy leaden belt was fastened tightly about his waist and he stepped over the rail on to the little side ladder, and so overboard, letting himself slowly down until he swung clear of the sloop's side. Then he was lowered away and went to the bottom, Bahama Bill slacking off the life-line and hose until he saw him standing upon the coral bank some twenty-five feet below the wrecker's deck.

Heldron turned the air-pump and Sam made fast the charge of dynamite, fixing the wires of a "Farmer's Machine" into the mercury-exploder and wrap-

ping the whole tightly in canvas made fast with marline, the whole weighted so that it would sink quickly.

He lowered the charge, and saw Smart's hand go out and receive it. Then the diver disappeared under the bilge of the wreck, leaving a thin trail of boiling water just over his head to tell of the escapement of the air.

## VII

Having fixed the charge where the mate had marked the surface of the wreck, Smart started to walk away. The light was strong in the clear water, and he gazed about him at the beautiful coral formations. The heavy growths took on many-coloured hues, and he walked out among them to admire them as one would the scenery on shore.

An albacore darted past like a flash of silver light. In the shadow of a huge sponge an enormous grouper took shelter, his eyes sticking out and gazing unwinkingly at the apparition of the man upon the bottom.

Smart went toward him and gave him a gentle poke, and in doing so gave the lines a sudden jerk. Instantly he was lifted off his feet and drawn upward, for Bahama Bill had felt the pull, and lost no time hauling his man aboard. Luckily the depth was not great, or the sudden change of pressure would have hurt.

Smart came to the side gesticulating wildly, and the more he waved his hands the quicker he was yanked

up. In a moment the mate had him on deck, and was unscrewing the front glass.

"What's de matter, cap?" he asked anxiously, when the diver's face appeared.

"Nothing; you fellows make me tired!" said Smart. "Go ahead and fire the charge."

The spark was sent along the wire, and a dull crack sounded from below. The water rose in a boiling mass astern, and spread out, churning and bubbling. It was not a large charge, and it had not been necessary to move the sloop.

Smart started Heldron again at the pump, and screwed on the glass. Then, taking his tools and a line, he went back to the work below.

The hole blown in the wrecked hull was quite large for the amount of powder used, but the splintered edges made it necessary to be careful on entering, on account of the air-hose and line. A swirling of disturbed water still made the light bad, but Smart, feeling the edges with his hand, stepped within the darkness, and proceeded to explore the interior of the lost ship.

He climbed slowly upward, dragging his lines after him, and stumbling over a mass of timber which obstructed the way. He was in the after-part of the brig, the part where the dead wood, narrowing toward the stern-post, made a difficult passage to go through. He went along carefully, feeling for dangerous projections which might entangle his air-hose. The ammunition was supposed to be in the lazarette, under



the cabin flooring, and he made his way in this direction.

Owing to the darkness, he was some time locating anything in the way of cases. Finally, however, he felt the square ends of boxes, and made haste to break one open. There were cans of tomatoes, or some kind of food, in the first one, and he felt along farther. Then he came in contact with a bulkhead. As it was inky dark below in the bilge of the sunken ship, he had to do all his work by means of the sense of touch alone. He couldn't see his own hand upon the glass of his helmet.

Something brushed against him and nearly upset him. It gave him an uncomfortable feeling, and a longing for the sunshine upon the sea floor of the Bank. He was not of a nervous temperament, and he knew that some sea denizen had evidently made the brig his home. Perhaps some spawning grouper or huge jew-fish.

Feeling along the bulkhead, he came upon a lot of small boxes. One of these he took under his arm and backed slowly out of the hole and into the clear water of the Bank. He laid the box upon the sea floor, and broke the covering with his hammer, hitting it lightly, the resisting power of the surrounding medium making it difficult even to strike at all. He tore away the fragments of the lid, and saw rows of cartridge-clips, the whole fixed and packed carefully. Making fast a line to the case, he signalled to hoist away, and brought his find to the surface.

The stuff proved to be all right. On breaking open a cartridge, the powder appeared dry, in spite of the long submergence, showing how carefully the ammunition had been put up. The dipping of the bullets into tallow had made the cartridges absolutely airtight, and they were as good as new.

The usual cost of ammunition was about two cents per cartridge wholesale. Half a million rounds would make quite a fortune, or something in the neighbourhood of ten thousand dollars to divide between himself and the black mate. Yes, it had been worth while, after all. Wrecking was not such a bad thing, if there was anything worth wrecking, and he wondered how the salvors of the brig had overlooked such a valuable asset. Even if he had to divide with the former owners — which he probably would not — he would have something worth going below for.

“Git de stuff — we’ll ship him to Noo York,” said Bill. “Ought to cl’ar a bit on dis hear deal. Dey’s got de Winchester mark on dem, an’ dat goes wid de agents, so do de Union ca’ttridge. Git de stuff outen her, cap, fo’ we cayn’t stay here long — it’s comin’ on bad befo’ dark, an’ dere’ll be too much sea to work ag’in fer a week.”

Smart lost no time getting back to the lazarette of the brig. He took his line with him, and, after fastening it to some of the cases, he signalled to haul away.

Case after case he removed in this manner, and, after being below nearly an hour, he began to feel the effects of the pressure. He concluded to go up and

rest for a short time before finishing the job. He hauled a lot of boxes together and lashed them firmly with a line, and signalled to haul away. He felt the pull, the tautening of the rope, and the cases slipped from under his hand. He straightened up and started to follow.

Then he felt the whole side of the ship suddenly fall toward him. It seemed like a mass of stuff, chest upon chest, toppling down upon him, and, before he could make even the slightest movement to get away, the whole pile of cases rolled over him like a great wave.

He was thrown upon his back, and a heavy weight rested upon the lower part of his body. He tried to move, and found himself jammed fast. Feeling nervously for his life-line and hose, he saw they were clear. He would not suffocate for awhile, anyway. He pulled lustily upon his life-line, and felt the strain of Bill's strength upon it, but it failed to move him. He was afraid the line would cut into his suit with the enormous strain.

He pulled the signal to slack away, but the men above were evidently excited, and they pulled all the harder. Then came a sudden slacking. He reached up and drew in the end of the life-line. It had parted near his helmet.

In the blackness of the sunken wreck Smart felt his nerve going. It was a bad place to have trouble. There was no other suit, no other machine or outfit for a man to go to his assistance. He might live for

an hour longer, or perhaps even two, but the end seemed certain unless he could free himself from the mass of cargo which had so suddenly piled down upon him.

It had been one of those accidents which are likely to happen to any one working in the darkness of a ship's hold where the cargo is not known, or not located by previous knowledge of the ship's loading.

He had evidently unshipped some of the ammunition-cases, and brought a mass of boxes of both provisions and cartridges upon him like an avalanche. His right arm was free, but his left was crushed under some mighty weight, and hurt him painfully. The air still whistled into his head-piece, showing that Hel-dron was working the pump steadily.

Bahama Bill was a cool hand, a man used to desperate emergencies, and Smart felt that the giant mate of the *Sea-Horse* would do what he could to set him free. He knew the black diver to be a mighty swimmer. He had cause to remember that fact, but it was far away from the surface where he now lay, and it looked as if he would have to pass in, to die the terrible death of the lost diver.

His imagination held him thinking, in spite of the pain and weight upon him. He could breathe easily, and the numbing effect of the pressure made his sufferings less than otherwise. He tried again and again to shift some of the cases, straining until the stars flashed into the darkness before him. It was useless. He could not budge anything.

The minutes seemed hours, and he began at last to feel the drowsy effect of the air too long driven into his lungs. He saw the beach, the white coral sand — then he was again at Key West.

VIII

Upon the deck of the *Sea-Horse* the men gazed blankly at each other when Bahama Bill hauled up the life-line, parted far below. Heldron stopped pumping, and Sam gave an exclamation.

"Keep dat pump workin'; keep it goin', I tell yo'," snapped the black mate, turning upon his man.

Heldron instantly turned away again, rapidly, sending the air below.

"Name ob de Lord — now whatcher make wid dat?" said Bill, looking at Sam.

"Gone fer sure," said Sam. "I wouldn't go down in them lead shoes for no money. I done knowed something like this would happen."

"I t'ink I don't need to give no more air, den," said Heldron.

"You turn dat pump, yo' blamed Dutchman, or I'll turn yo' hide wrong-side out, yo' hear me," snarled the mate. "Gimme a heavy line, Sam; gimme something I can't break — jump, yo' Conch!"

"Goin' after him?" asked Sam, hauling the end of the mainsheet clear to the rail. "I don't think you kin get him. Better leave him down; them shoes is enough to hold him. I'd hate to lose the cap'n, but he's gone for sure!"

The huge form of the mate balanced for an instant upon the rail. He cleared enough line to take to the bottom, and had Sam stand with coils of it ready to pay out. Then down he went with the end of it, swimming strongly for the hole in the bilge of the brig. The opening showed before him, but he hesitated not a moment. He swam straight into the black hole, butting his head against the carlines under the half-deck, but keeping straight as he could for the diver by following the air-hose with his hand.

It was a long swim to the place where Smart lay. A full minute had been taken up before the mate felt the contact of the metal helmet. He passed the heavy line under it, but found his wind giving way under the strain. Quickly following the air-hose out, he struggled for the clear water, and came to the surface with a blow like a grampus. He had been down two minutes and a half.

Sam seized his hand and helped him aboard, where he lay upon the deck, bleeding, a slight trickle from the corner of his ugly mouth and from his nose.

"You can't make it, Bill," Sam declared. "Let the poor devil go. You done the best you could."

"I stop now wid de air, hey? W'at you says, Mr. Bill?"

Heldron's query aroused Bahama Bill. "If you slack up on dat pump, yo' dies a wuss death 'n Cap'n Smart," he said wearily, and in an even tone. It was evident that the strain had been hard on him, but he was game.

In a minute he sat up.

"I get him dis hear time," he growled, shaking himself and standing upon the rail again.

His giant black body twitched, the huge muscles under the ebony skin worked, flowing, contracting, and slacking up, making a wavelike motion, but showing the mighty power which lay in his frame. He was getting worked up to a nervous pitch, and the trembling was not from weakness. It was the gathering power in his thews which was beginning to work.

He flung far out, and dropped straight downward with a pitch-pole plunge, going furiously down like some monstrous sea-demon. Only a flash of his black body showed before he had turned the bend, and was following the air-hose into the hole.

This time he saved many seconds. He reached the form of Smart, and caught the end of the mainsheet about him, quickly slipping a hitch. Then he hauled himself out into the sunshine again, and came rising like a fish to the surface. In a moment he was back aboard the *Sea-Horse*, and then he spoke.

"Git on to dat line, yo', Sam . . . git hold quick . . . I got him . . . give him de air, yo' Dutchman. . . . An' now fer a heave what is a heave."

With a mighty effort the two men threw their whole weight upon the line. It held. Nothing gave for a moment. Bahama Bill, bracing his naked feet upon the rail, bent his mighty loins, and took a deep breath.

"Heave-ho!" he bellowed, and set his muscles to the strain.

Sam lifted with all his force. Almost instantly the two of them plunged backward, and fell over each other on deck. The line became slack, but before they could get to their feet, Heldron had left the pump and was hauling in hand-over-hand, and in a moment the form of Smart showed below the surface.

The black mate sprang to his feet and gave the Dutchman a cuff which sent him over the side, and, seizing the line, he hauled the limp form of the diver on deck quicker than it takes to tell it. In a moment he had the glass off the helmet, and was staring into the white face of the insensible seaman.

"Get somethin' to drink — quick," he said.

Sam rushed for a dipper of water, and, upon bringing it, was knocked over the head with it for his pains.

"Yo' bring me somethin' — quick — yo' understand," roared the mate. "I knows yo' got some for-rads — now, then, jump!"

Sam quickly brought a bottle of gin, half-full. Smart had some of the fiery liquid poured between his lips. Then Heldron, who had scrambled back aboard, cursing and spluttering, came aft, and helped them to get off the suit.

It was half an hour afterward before the captain came around enough to tell what had happened. His left arm was badly mashed, but not broken. The heavy suit had not been cut through, and to this fact



he owed his life. His legs were stiff and sore from the heavy weight which had lain upon them, but he was otherwise uninjured.

"I reckon yo'll be able to go down ag'in in a little while," said the mate. "We got most of the stuff, I reckon, but we might as well take all dat's dere."

"How many cases have we?" asked Smart.

"'Bout fifty — nearly a million rounds, an' all good."

"Well, that's all we'll get to-day," said Smart, "unless you want to take a try at it."

"Toe bad, toe bad," muttered Bahama Bill. "I'se sho sorry you's sech a puny little man, cap, but de wedder is gittin' bad, ennyways, an' I reckon we might as well make a slant fer Nassau."

"That'll about suit me, all right," said Smart.

## XI

### The Iconoclast

THE wrecking-sloop *Sea-Horse* came smashing the seas headlong past Fowey Rocks, heading for the channel over the reef into Bay Biscayne. She had left Nassau the day before, and had made a record run across the Gulf Stream, carrying sail through a heavy head sea, which flew in a storm of white water over her bows and weather-rail all day, making the deck almost uninhabitable. Bahama Bill, otherwise known as Bill Haskins, wrecker and sponger, mate and half-owner, held the wheel-spokes, and sat back upon the edge of the wheel-gear, bracing one foot to leeward. Sam, a Conch, and Heldron, a Dutchman, both sailors and able seamen, lounged in the lee of the cabin-scuttle and smoked, their oilskins streaming water, but loosened on account of the warmth of the air. Captain Smart, late of the Dunn schooner wrecked just below Carysfort Reef, on a cruise to Boca Grande Pass for tarpon, sat in the doorway of the companion-way and watched the giant mate of the *Sea-Horse* hold the flying sloop on her course with one powerful hand, while with the other he shielded his pipe from the spray.

Smart was thinking over the strange events which happened to bring him in contact with the wreckers: the loss of his schooner caused by the leak made by Bahama Bill; the loss of his position as officer on the liner he had left to take command of the yacht, and the strange fight in the saloon at Key West, which ended in his going with the giant black to keep out of trouble.

They had now just ridden out a bad spell of weather in Nassau, where they had laid up with cartridge-cases taken from the brig *Bulldog*, wrecked on the Great Bahama Bank, and they were hurrying to the nearest American port to discharge them to some dealer, and realize what profits they could. The ammunition was perfectly good and sound, in spite of being submerged under the sea for a long time, for the cases had been put up for tropical weather and made perfectly waterproof. They had several thousand dollars' worth aboard, and it would only be necessary to prove their fitness for use to realize upon them. To Miami they laid their course without delay, to get in touch with the express and railroad.

"Seems like we got to git thar to-night, sure," said the mate, sucking at his pipe.

"Looks like we'll make it easily," assented Smart. "I suppose you know the reef well enough to go in any time, hey?"

"Jest as well at night as daytime," said the mate.

"And when we get in — what then? Do you know any one who'll deal with us? Do you know who'll

buy ammunition from you even at a twenty per cent. discount?" asked Smart.

"I reckon we won't have to burn any of them ca'tridges, cap; not by a blamed sight. We might have to wait a spell fo' suah, but we kin sell 'em, all right."

"Got enough money to live on while we wait, hey?" asked Smart.

Bahama Bill scowled. Then he gave the captain a queer look.

"See here, cap," he said. "Yo' know Bull Sanders is skipper an' half-owner of this here sloop? Well, he's on a tear up the beach. If he comes back broke he'll want toe borrow off'n me — see? Well, I knows what that means. I jest naturally sent all the money abo'd to my Jule — yo' ain't married, cap, or you'd know what a wife means. 'Scrappy Jule' kin take keer of all de money I gets, an' yo' needn't make no moan toe dat. Jule is all right, an' if yo' got a right good memory, yo' suah remember she don't do no washin' fo' po' white folks."

"I suppose that means that the ten-spot I saved from the fracas in Journegan's barroom is all the cash aboard, then," said Smart.

He was thinking how strange it was for him to be associating with a self-confessed wrecker of the old school, the type which waited not for the elements, but made events happen with a rapidity which put even a stormy season to shame.

He would have liked to get away from the whole

business, get away from men of Bahama Bill's class, but he could not help thinking that the giant black man had some cause, according to his way of looking at things, to do as he had done.

The yacht owner had insulted him, had made it an open question of hostility between them, and the wrecker had simply gone ahead and regarded the owner's feeling not at all, but caused by indirect means the loss of his vessel.

Bill had many good points. He had helped Smart out of a difficult situation in Key West, where the land-sharks had set out to trim him clean. He had put him in the way, almost in spite of himself, of making a few thousand dollars within a week or two, and had saved his life by diving into a dangerous wreck after him when caught in her shifting cargo.

Smart was in a strange position, almost dead broke, with several thousand dollars' worth of salvage due him from his efforts. He would be tied up with the sloop for several weeks, perhaps several months, until the sales were made and the salvage divided. To leave her would risk losing the share due him, for Bahama Bill would hardly stand for desertion until the affair was settled, no matter what the provocation.

They beat in over the reef, up the crooked, shallow channel into Biscayne Bay, and laid their course for the docks at Miami, where they arrived during daylight.

Two days were spent trying to make the sales of the cargo, but the dealers insisted on testing the powder

from each and every case before paying, or taking it on, so there was a delay of at least two weeks staring them in the face. The crew having enough to eat minded the waiting not the least. The mate cared nothing as long as the ultimate end was in sight, for he had enough hog and hominy aboard to last twice as long.

The sloop lay off the docks in a scant seven feet of water, her keel just grazing the coral bottom, which was as plainly visible beneath her as though she were surrounded by clear air instead of the clearer water of the bay. The huge, fashionable hotel loomed high against the background of palms and cocoanuts, making an impressive sight, and also a comfortable abode for the rich tourists who filled it during this end of the season. Prices were high, and Smart spent much time watching the idle rich wandering about the beautiful gardens.

Several gambling-joints were in full blast, for it was always the policy of the eminent Florida philanthropist who owned the tourist accommodations on the east coast to build a church upon one side of his dominions, and then a gambling-hell upon the other. Both were necessary to draw the lazy rich.

Smart noticed several of the sporting gentry wandering about, but, having nothing to gamble with, he was forced to look on with little interest.

On the third day of their stay in harbour, a man sauntered down to the dock close aboard, and stood gazing at the *Sea-Horse*. He was perfectly dressed

in the height of fashion, and he swung a light cane lazily while he gazed at the wrecker. He wore a thin moustache, and his high, straight nose seemed to hook over it to an abnormal extent. His eyes were a very light blue, so pale that they appeared to be colourless, but he had an altogether well-fed, well-satisfied look; one of seeming benevolence and kindliness, which attracted Smart's attention. Smart and the mate of the *Sea-Horse* were sitting upon the cabin-house in the shade of a drying trysail, and the stranger spoke to them.

"Sloop for charter?" he asked abruptly, in a high voice, which carried over the short distance of water with some force.

"What fo'?" asked Bahama Bill, without moving.

"Oh, we want to fish and shoot. I don't care for the yachts for hire; their owners don't seem to know where to go to get sport. I'd rather charter from a man who knows something of the reef to the southward, and you look as if you belong around here."

"Yo' sho' got a bad guesser in yo' haid, Mister Yankee," said the mate. "What make yo' think we belongs around here?"

Smart studied the man carefully while he was talking. He was a close observer, but he failed to place this suave, well-groomed gentleman in his vocation. He might be a gambler, a sport, or just a rich fellow wanting amusement. The latter seemed most likely, so Smart spoke up, hoping to land a few dollars while waiting for his share of the salvage.

"We'll charter for thirty dollars a day," he said reluctantly, and, as he did so, the black mate gave a grunt and grinned insultingly at the shore.

"Will you go anywhere we want?" asked the man.

"Sho' we will dat, perfesser," broke in Bahama Bill, unable to restrain himself at the thought of the graft. The idea of thirty dollars per day was good, and he slapped Smart a terrific blow upon the back in high good nature at the thought of it. "Sho', perfesser, we'll carry yo' toe hell — an' half-way back, fer thirty a day. Are yo' on?"

There was a slight sneer on the man's face when he heard the mate's manner, but he answered quietly, in the same far-reaching voice, that he would consider the vessel his, and that if one of them would come ashore for the money, he would bind the bargain by pay for the first day at once.

At the instant he stopped speaking Heldron the Dutchman came aft to where the mate sat. Bahama Bill at once seized him about the waist and hove him far out over the side.

"Git that money, yo' beggar," he laughed, as the sailor landed in the water with a tremendous splash. Sam, the Conch, snickered. "Yo' go after him, toe see he comes back," said Bill, and, making a pass at the man, sent him over also. They swam the distance in a few moments, much to the amusement of the gentleman on the wharf, who seemed to like the mate's energetic manner of doing things. The money was paid, and the men swam back aboard, climbing into



the small boat towing astern, and coming over the taff-rail none the worse in temper. There was good money for all in the deal, and they were pleased.

## II

In about an hour the man returned with a friend, both of them loaded with fishing-rods and other parts of a gentleman's sporting outfit. They were rowed aboard by the mate, and announced that they were ready at once to get to sea. The mainsail was hoisted, and in a few minutes the wrecking-sloop was ready to stand down the channel.

Just at this moment the gentlemen, who had been arranging their fishing-rods and clothes upon the transoms in the cabin, came on deck and said that they had forgotten to bring any provisions for the cruise. The second man declared he had ordered a large box sent aboard, and asked with some anxiety if it had arrived.

"There ain't nothing come abo'd sence yo' left," said Bill surlily, annoyed at the delay. "We's got good grub abo'd here, an' enough fer a week."

"You will pardon me, my good fellow," said the second man, who was very tall and thin, with a lined face. "You know, or should know, I'm an invalid, and cannot eat the ordinary food which I love so well. It is for this that we have taken the boat. Won't you allow me the use of your crew to help carry the provisions aboard? We expect to be out for several weeks,

and must have plenty of the kind of food I am forced to eat."

"Yo' don't look so very puny," said Bill; "but, o' co'se, if youse an invalid, yo' sho'ly wants toe git some soft feed. We eats hoag an' hominy abo'd here, an' I tells yo' it's mighty good hoag; costs me seven cents a pound."

The small boat was called away, and, with Sam and Heldron to help carry the provisions, the two gentlemen went ashore again.

Half an hour passed, and Bill was getting surly. The tide was falling, and the chances of hitting the reef were good. The wind dropped, and the surface of the bay was just ruffled by it. Far away to the southward the little hump of Soldier Key stood out above the surrounding reef, and the tall palms of Florida Cape seemed to be motionless.

"What the name o' sin d'ye think dem folks is doin'?" said Bahama Bill finally, rising from the quarter and gazing toward the shore. "I sho' likes toe make money easy, but when I gits de sail on dis hear ship, I likes toe see her go. Gittin' hot, an' de wind's dropped. I hate to run that channel on a fallin' tide without wind enough to drive her good an' strong over dem shoal places. Hello! what's dat?"

Smart looked up, and followed the direction of the man's gaze. A wagon was tearing down the street at a breakneck pace, and upon it were the two gentlemen who had chartered the sloop. Sam and Heldron sprang up from the dock to meet them as the vehicle

drew up, and with a great show of haste all four men were struggling with a small but apparently very heavy box.

In a few moments, in spite of its weight, it was being lowered into the small boat, and Smart noticed that when all hands sprang in, she was nearly gunwale down with the cargo. The men rowed as though urged to their utmost, and in a few minutes the boat was alongside.

"Didn't want to keep you waiting," cried the tall, thin-faced man.

"No," said the man who had chartered the sloop, "we knew you would hate to be delayed, so we hurried." His benevolent expression beamed up at the mate, but Smart noted that every now and then his pale eyes shifted uneasily toward the dock, where the wagon was still standing unattended.

A line was cast over the side, and Bill took hold to hoist the box on deck. He gave a tug, and then stopped suddenly.

"What in thunder yo' got toe eat in dere?" he growled. "Dat's lead, sho' 'nuff lead, an' no mistake. We got sinkers enough abo'd here fer all de fishin' yo'll do dis spring. Sam! Heldron, yo' Dutchman! Cap'n, come, all hands git a hold an' h'ist away. Man, I nigh broke my pore ole back wid de heft ob dat box."

They all tailed on to the line, and hoisted the box on deck.

"Get it below," said the man with the moustache and pale eyes; "we'll give you a hand."

In a few minutes the weighty box, which appeared to be of wood, was landed safely below in the cabin. The gentleman opened a small bottle of liquor, and offered a drink all around. It passed until Bahama Bill came to it, and he silently uptilted the bottle and drained it to the last drop, flinging it up the companionway and overboard.

"Good!" cried the gentlemen together. "Now for the open sea. Let's try to find out how quick we can get from here to the end of the reef." And suiting the action to the words, they sprang up the companionway, followed by the mate, who was now in a better frame of mind.

"Git de hook off'n de groun'," bawled Bill. "Hi'st de jib." And he hauled flat the mainsheet, and rolled the wheel over as the short cable came in and the anchor broke clear.

Smart hoisted the head-sails, and they filled away for the open sea.

Smart sat aft upon the taffrail, and the two guests settled themselves upon boxes which Sam brought out in place of chairs. Bill held the wheel, heading the *Sea-Horse* down the narrow channel. She moved slowly in the light air, and the thin-faced man stretched out his long frame and looked her over critically.

"Seems like she isn't very fast," he remarked to his pale-eyed companion.

Bahama Bill looked at him a moment, but said nothing.

"Pretty dirty sort of ship, hey?" said the thin fellow again, in a low tone.

The mate was about to make some reply, but Smart nudged him, and he relaxed into a scowl.

"Aw, well, I reckon we'll make it all right," said the pale-eyed man, his face beaming satisfaction and his high nose sniffing the salt air.

"With a decent boat, yes," said the other, "but this one's mighty rough. I never saw a more poorly rigged affair. Seems like she's rigged from the wrecks of other vessels. Don't look like she'll make six knots."

Bahama Bill grunted, but Smart nudged him again, and he said nothing. The yacht captain knew that gentlemen would not stand for rough talk from men of Bahama Bill's type, and he did not want to lose the charter. It meant plenty of money and comfortable living until he could get his salvage.

"Let them talk — don't butt in — say nothing," he admonished Bill, in a whisper.

The big mate heard, but seemed resentful. "What dey want toe knock my ship fo'?" growled the giant. "Ain't she a good sloop? Ain't she done her work all right every time? She's paid me good money, me an' Bull Sanders — no, I don't like no knockin' goin' on abo'd here."

"Cut it out, keep quiet — we get the money if you do," said Smart. "What good will it do you to get them angry, so they won't want to charter us again?"

Man! it's good money, thirty dollars a day — let it go at that."

The pale-eyed man looked at the mate. "It's about dinner-time, isn't it?" he asked. "We're mighty hungry, and if you can let the cook get to work, we'll be ready."

"Where's the soft grub fo' dat invalid?" growled Bahama Bill. "I thought he couldn't eat hoag an' hominy — Heldron, yo' Dutchman, git the fire started an' let the perfessers eat as soon as yo' kin."

They were well down the channel now, but Smart, on looking back, saw a small schooner making sail hastily. She started off, heading in their wake, and about a mile astern.

The passenger with the pale eyes watched her sharply for some moments, and the benevolent expression faded from his face. The thin man, the invalid, started up and gazed at her, but was pulled down again by his companion.

"That fellow astern," said the charterer, his high nose sniffing sneeringly at the schooner, "thinks he has a smart vessel, and bet us this morning that he could beat this old sloop to the Fowey Rocks. Don't let him come up on us whatever you do. I'll give you ten dollars extra to-day if you run him out of sight before dark."

"Looks like a smart vessel," said Bahama Bill, gazing aft. "I ain't much at racing, but give this sloop a good breeze, an' maybe you'll land yo' money."

The passengers ate their meal, and to the credit of

the invalid be it said that he ate more of the "hoag" than his companion. He also put away an immense portion of the hominy, and his thin face seemed less wrinkled when he appeared on deck to take a look at the schooner.

Smart watched the following vessel, and saw that she was gaining. The expression of the pale-eyed man was even more sinister than before, and the quiet, urbane look gave way to one of ferocity. The high, thin nose seemed like the beak of some bird of prey, and the moustache bristled with anxiety and apparent vexation. The thin-faced invalid's expression was also one of evident concern, the lines of his face drawing tighter as the distance lessened between the two ships.

"Who's that fellow that looks like the marshal abo'd the schooner?" asked the mate.

"Oh, that's a friend of mine. He dresses up like that when he goes hunting or fishing. He used to be in the army, and he likes to wear the clothes like a uniform," said the thin-faced man.

"Speaking of the army," said the pale-eyed one, "that puts me in mind of that little Colt automatic-gun I have. They use them now in the service, and say they carry like a rifle. I believe I'll take a pop at Charlie just to scare him, hey? It won't hurt him at this distance, anyway."

"By all means," laughed the thin-faced man, "take a try at him. It'll scare him to death, I bet you."

Bahama Bill eyed the men curiously, but as it ap-

peared to be none of his business whether they indulged in rough play, he said nothing. Smart was too engrossed to notice that the pale-eyed man had drawn a large automatic pistol, and was resting it upon the rail, until he had pulled the trigger. The sharp, whiplike report without any smoke startled him. The shrill whine of the projectile whistled over the water, and the man who stood upon the schooner's deck quickly disappeared. In a few moments the "cheep" of a rifle-bullet cut the air, and "spanged" with a thud into the mainmast, followed by a faint crack sounding over the sea.

The pale-eyed man fired six shots in answer now, and they came so quickly that there was hardly a second between the reports.

"What yo' doin', havin' a gun fight?" roared Bill. "What yo' mean by shootin' a fellow up what ain't doin' nothin' but sailin' after yo'? What's de lay? Sing out."

The pale-eyed man turned his gaze upon the giant mate, and, as he did so, he shoved another clip of cartridges into his weapon.

"Don't get excited," he said calmly. "My friend here is an iconoclast, a knocker. He objects to the simplicity of your ship, to her rigging, to her going qualities. He objected to the perfection of that schooner, also. He speaks out, and consequently gets into trouble. Now it's for you to show him that he's right; that, after all, racing is a game between men, not



between ships. I'll make it fifty dollars if you keep that schooner just where she belongs."

"I'll run her out of sight befo' night, if de wind comes — hit looks like it's coming now, by the shake outside the reef — but dat's de United States marshal youse fired on, perfesser. I knows him of old, an' I got no use fer him. But watcher got in de box? Speak up, or I throws her into the wind."

"If you so much as alter the course of this sloop one point," said the thin-faced man quietly, from a place to leeward, where he had gone unobserved, "I'll fill you so full of lead that you'll make a hole in the bottom where you'll strike. Head her out over the reef, and then due east, until further orders."

While he spoke he rested a long-barrelled six-shooter of the heaviest pattern in the hollow of his arm, with its muzzle pointing directly at the heart of the giant mate. The man with the pale eyes sat upon the taffrail with his Colt automatic in readiness, and looked Smart and the two men over without a word. Speech was unnecessary. The iconoclast had done all that was needed to bring about a perfect understanding, and, as both men were armed with guns that admitted of some respect, the *Sea-Horse* held her way over the reef under all sail, while the freshening breeze heeled her gradually over until she fairly tore along through a calm sea, leaving a snowy, boiling wake astern.

## III

Bahama Bill looked his men over. He feared neither gun nor knife when the time came for a fracas, but there was another consideration which moved him deeper than the threat of the thin-faced invalid. The marshal had libelled his vessel upon an occasion, for the payment of a small bill. Here he was forced, at the point of a gun, to run away, to carry the evident prey with him. It would exonerate him if caught, for he could prove that it was a matter he had no discretion in. He could, with all safety, put as much space between the two vessels as possible. All hands would swear that he was forced to do so.

The idea tickled him, and his huge, ugly mouth broadened out into a sinister grin as the *Sea-Horse*, racing along through the choppy water of the edge of the Gulf Stream, poked her short horn out over the foam, and tore away to windward.

The box in the cabin excited his curiosity, but he felt sure that it was of value, and that the men were trying to make a getaway with it. Smart was sitting quietly watching the affair, and being, like the mate, under the guns of the passengers, there was nothing to do but obey orders, or take the consequences.

"Seems like your health has improved wonderfully since you dined on the ship's grub," said the yacht captain, addressing the invalid, who held the revolver.

"The sea air is good for the health," assented that gentleman, his thin face lining up into something resembling a smile. "It'll be healthy for all of us out

here in the broad ocean, free from all cares. Oh, the life on the bounding wave for me — isn't that so, Jim?" said he, referring to his companion.

The sharp "ping" of a bullet interrupted the answer, and it was found that to be perfectly safe it was necessary to remain under cover.

"Those bullets would go through the ship both ways and back again," said the invalid, as the rest snuggled down, "but of course it's well to keep out of sight. Better put everything you can on her, skipper," he added, addressing the mate, "if you want to keep clear. Let her go. Don't stop on our account. When we get an offing, I'll trust you to steer without trouble, and I'll put out a line to catch some supper. There ought to be fine fishing off the reef this time of year."

"Oh, I'm mighty feared ob those guns," said Bahama Bill, in a deep voice, which he tried to raise to a frightened treble. "I'll steer her all right toe any place yo' wants toe go. Lay de co'se, says me. I'll take youse dere if the hooker'll go."

"It's a pity you haven't some decent canvas aboard her," said the invalid.

"If you had some decent gear, we might show that fellow a clean wake. You seem to know your business, all right."

"If you want to make a getaway, you better stop knocking this sloop," said Smart.

"Dat's right, cap'n, ef dese perfessers want toe make good, dey better quit hittin' de *Sea-Horse*. I

won't stand fer much ob dat foolishing," said Bahama Bill.

"The invalid is a regular image-breaker," said the pale-eyed man sympathetically; "don't mind the knocks, my good fellow. Tell me what other cloth you can put on the ship, and I'll see that it's spread. They're getting out everything that will hold wind astern of us."

This was the case aboard the schooner. The United States marshal, Tom Fields, had been told of the successful onslaught of "Thin Jim" and Dick Nichols, sometimes known as "The Owl," on account of his colourless eyes, upon the safe of the gambling establishment. This contained seven thousand dollars in cash, and nearly as much more in jewelry that had been accepted for gambling debts.

The two crooks, a pair of the most desperate and notorious cracksmen, had made good the haul in broad daylight, having first arranged to have the sloop ready and waiting for the reception of the valuables. The ignorance of her crew was rightly depended upon, and the plot had so far been fairly successful. If they could once get to sea, the rest would be easy, for they could land anywhere upon the Bahamas, from Nassau a thousand miles down to the Great Inagua Bank. It would be next to impossible to catch them. It all depended upon the vessel and her manœuvring.

Fields recognized the *Sea-Horse* at once, and, knowing her peculiar character, and also that of her owners, he at once came to the conclusion that the giant mate

of the wrecker was in the game with the other two experts from the North. He at once pressed the yacht *Silver Bar* into service, and making sail about the time the *Sea-Horse* was standing out the channel, came along in pursuit, with the conviction that he would soon run the heavier working vessel down under his gun and force her to surrender.

Armed with a modern rifle of small bore and great range, he had returned the fire of the burglars at once, in the hope that he might cripple some one, even at the range of half a mile. His ammunition consisted of hardly more than a handful of cartridges, and he was forced to use these sparingly, depending now upon the seamanship of his crew and the seaworthiness of the *Silver Bar* to make his catch.

With all sail he stood down the channel, and was beginning to haul up on the *Sea-Horse*, when she took the first of the southerly wind coming over the reef. This had given her a good start, and she was now about a mile to windward, and going like mad to the eastward, across the Gulf Stream.

"Clap everything you can on her," begged the marshal; "put out the awning, tarpaulins, anything that will drive us. It's a thousand dollars reward if we land them, and I'll split even with you if we do."

The captain of the *Silver Bar* needed no urging. He wanted that five hundred. He would have to go, anyway, and here was the chance of the season. He broke out jib-topsails, stretched his mainsail to the utmost, and trimmed his canvas for the struggle, set-

ting a club-topsail aft and a working one forward, with a big maintopmast staysail. He was soon making the most of the lively breeze, and plunging through the blue water to the tune of ten knots, heading right into the wake of the flying *Sea-Horse*.

The wrecking-sloop, leaning well down to the now freshening gale, tore a way through the Gulf Stream, sending the spray flying over her in a constant shower. She headed well up, a trifle closer than the schooner, and she waded through it like a live thing. Her rough gear, meant for work and hard usage, stood her in good stead in the heavy water off shore.

All the lines stretching taut as bow-strings to the pressure made a musical humming which sounded pleasantly upon the ears of the listening men aft. They still held their weapons in readiness, but it was evident that Bahama Bill was going to send his favourite through to a finish in a style fitting her record.

With one hand upon the wheel-spokes, he lounged upon the steering-gear, nor ducked nor winced as the rifle projectiles now and again sang past. The range was getting too great to be dangerous, and the ammunition of the marshal was getting low. Finally the fire astern ceased, and the two vessels raced silently across the Stream, each striving to the utmost for the objective point, the Great Bahama Bank, seventy miles away, due east.

Once upon the shoal, the wrecker would have the advantage, for he knew the Bank well, and could follow channels which the heavier schooner would almost

certainly fetch up in. The marshal knew this, and urged the schooner to the limit of her powers.

Away they went across the Stream. The *Silver Bar* was rooting deeply into the choppy sea, caused by the strong northerly current which flows eternally between the Florida Reef and the Great Bahama Bank. She would plunge headlong, and bury her bows clear to the knightheads, ramming the water so heavily that it burst into a great comber from both sides. Then she would raise her dripping forefoot clear, until one could see under her body aft to the heel of the foremast, rearing up like a spirited horse under the spur. Down she would plunge again with a forward lunge, and every line of standing rigging would set like a bar with the strain.

Fields, the marshal, was getting all he could out of her, and she was gradually hauling up in the wake of the wrecker. Before the sun sank in the west she was less than half a mile astern, and coming along handsomely.

Smart, on the *Sea-Horse*, trimmed his canvas, stretched the peak of the mainsail, and sweated the topsail sheet and tack until the lines would stand no more. The *Sea-Horse* was literally flying through it, and her heavy build caused her to strike the seas with a smash which flung the spray in showers.

Bahama Bill glanced astern, and saw that he would soon be alongside the pursuer, and the anxious faces of the passengers told of a nervousness which could not be concealed. Both Sam and Heldron were aware

that they were making a getaway, but they had no choice in the matter, and they would obey the mate to the last.

Smart studied out several wild propositions which occurred to him to disable the sloop and be overhauled, but, as there was every prospect of getting shot for any attempt, he wisely kept on, feeling sure that the marshal would soon be alongside and force surrender.

They had run all the afternoon, and had gone many miles, but now that they were really at sea, the schooner would have the advantage.

Darkness came on, and the thin man holding the revolver appeared to tire. "You might get dinner ready," said he, "I'm about ready to eat again."

"I don't got noddings but pork, cold an' fat," said Heldron, who acted as cook.

"Bring it on deck," said the invalid. "It's a shame you fellows live the way you do."

He bolted a full pound of the greasy meat, and seemed to enjoy it.

"Does me good to see how you've improved under the salt air," said Smart.

"The more he eats the thinner he gets," said the pale-eyed man, shifting his automatic pistol into his left hand. "You can let me have a try at it now."

After all hands had eaten, the darkness had grown to the blackness of a tropic night. The *Sea-Horse* kept along without lights, but those of the schooner soon showed close astern, and appeared exceedingly



near. No shots had been fired, although the range was now close, and there was every opportunity, could the marshal see, of hitting a man, but the plunging of the vessels evidently made his aim uncertain, and he reserved his fire, feeling sure that he would soon be close enough to force matters to a satisfactory conclusion without bloodshed.

"Dere ain't but one chanct in fo'ty ob our makin' de gitaway," said Bill, gazing astern at the approaching vessel, "but I'll do the bes' I kin to shoo fly dat ornery marshal. Dere's a bit ob a squall makin' ah'ad, an' ef we kin hold on till it comes up, I'll try to fluke him when it's thick."

"My black friend, if your boat was any good you could make a getaway without trouble, but this craft is surely on the bum," said the thin-faced invalid ruefully. "I've no doubt you think her all right in her way, but her way is not that of those who expect to make either comfort or time when afloat — she's rotten."

"Look here," said Bahama Bill. "Yo' better take my advice an' not hit this sloop any more. If yo' don't think she's any good, why yo' come abo'd her? Why yo' want to run off with her, hey?"

"Why, indeed?" sighed the invalid, shifting his gun and gazing ahead at the gathering blackness of the squall, which was just one of those little puffs of smudge, a bit of breeze and drizzle, common to southerly wind in the Stream.

"Shall I run her off an' make the try fo' it?" asked the mate.

"Yes, do the best you can," said the iconoclast, nursing the barrel of the six-shooter. "Looks like we're up against it," he added to his pale-eyed partner, who seemed to grow more and more anxious as the pursuing schooner drew up in the wake of the *Sea-Horse*.

"Stand by to haul down the jib an' fo'sta's'l," ordered the mate, and just then the first puff of the squall heeled the sloop over slightly, and gave her greater speed. The rain came with the breeze, and for a moment the vessel fairly tore along with the increased pressure. It gave them considerable advantage over the schooner, for it struck them first.

Just as it began to show signs of slacking up, Bahama Bill gave his final orders. The head-sails were run down so as not to show against the sky, and the mainsail run off until the leech was on edge to the pursuing vessel, the *Sea-Horse* squaring away and running off at nearly right angles to her course. In this manner she presented little besides her mast to be seen in the darkness, her white canvas being now almost if not quite out of sight.

"Stan' up an' look astern, now," said Bahama Bill to the thin-faced man.

The request was complied with, both men standing up and gazing back into the blackness, which now showed only the port, or red, light of the schooner, telling plainly that she had not discovered their ruse,

and was holding on with the freshening breeze, confident that when it let up she would be close aboard the sloop.

The course of the *Sea-Horse* was almost due north, while that of the pursuing vessel was east. Before the thickness of the rain was over, the wrecker would be safely out of sight to the northward, and the marshal would hold on only to find he was chasing nothing. They watched her pass on toward the Bahamas, and her lights fade out, and then the thin-faced passenger spoke.

"For a bum old boat, this did the trick, all right," said he to his partner. "I didn't think we'd make it, but I guess we will, all right, now — what?"

"Looks like we're off for fair," said the pale-eyed man. "We'll make a landing without delay, and let the marshal go hunting the town of Nassau for two well — but not favourably — known gentlemen. That's a strong shooting rifle he carries, hey?"

While they talked, interested in the chase, the mate of the *Sea-Horse* had begun to think of his part in the affair. Both he and Smart had now to face a serious charge, and the prospect was not pleasant, especially as they had not chosen to take part in the escape of the two men who now had shown that they were fugitives from the law and the marshal.

The mate had outwitted his old enemy, and, as the success of his seamanship became evident, he began to realize that the game was now up to him. Smart stood near, and was about to say something to that

effect, when he caught the glint of the black man's eye, shining white in the darkness.

It conveyed a meaning to the yacht captain, for he was well versed in tricks of the sea, and he at once spoke to the passengers, calling their attention to the vanishing ship. He did not know just what Bahama Bill would do, but he knew from that look he would act, and act at once.

Almost instantly the mate pushed the wheel-spokes slowly over, doing it so gently, so gradually, that only Smart was aware that the wind was hauling to the lee, and that the mainsail would soon be taken aback. He spoke again, and the men gazed a moment more at the shadow passing out across the Stream. Then the mainsail took the wind to port, and swung with a quick jibe to starboard.

The sheet well off came over in a bight, and, while the two gentlemen of fortune had agility enough to dodge the main boom, the line caught the tall, thin-faced invalid, and jerked him quickly over the side into the sea.

The other man sprang out of the way, but almost instantly recovered himself, and covered the mate with his weapon. He seemed to realize that some trick had been played, but just what he failed to understand. He hesitated to fire, and that instant cost him the game. Bahama Bill made a quick plunge over the taffrail, and disappeared in the white wake astern. The pale-eyed man held his pistol in readiness to shoot, but he was warned again by Smart's voice.

"Don't fire, you fool, he'll save your friend," cried the captain. "They'll hear the shot aboard the schooner — put up your gun."

The quickness of events seemed to cause even the cool-headed burglar to hesitate as to what course to pursue. The mate had gone overboard evidently to save his companion. It was certain death to be left out there in the ocean, and Smart was even now swinging the *Sea-Horse* around in a great circle, heading well to the westward, to make it farthest from the disappearing schooner.

Heldron and Sam had sprung to the sheet, and were rapidly hauling it in hand over hand, while Smart bawled out orders for them, regardless of the saturnine passenger with the gun, who seemed undecided whether to shoot some of them or not.

He sat down and gazed astern at the place where the two men had vanished. He knew his companion was a strong swimmer, but he knew nothing of the black man's giant strength, his remarkable staying powers, and fishlike ability in the sea.

Smart hauled the sloop up on her port tack, and slowly circled, knowing almost exactly where he would pick up the mate. He would not go too fast, for fear of overrunning him, and he felt certain that he need not hurry on his account.

The pale-eyed man appeared to think there was little use hunting for men in the darkness, and his knowledge of his whereabouts was evidently completely lost.

"What's the use, now?" he asked finally. "You

can't find a man in the ocean on a dark night. Better give it up. Let's make a run back for the Keys."

"With Bill trying to save your partner?" asked Smart, in feigned disgust.

"Oh, well, my friend, if there was any use of hunting for them, I would stay as long as the next man."

"I'm not exactly what you might call your friend," said Smart coldly, "but I'm going to stay around here a little while. Don't try to force matters, because I won't leave this part of the Atlantic until I'm satisfied both are gone for good."

"See here, Mr. Sailor-man," said the pale-eyed one. "I hold the decision just now. I don't want to make rough-house on board of your excellent yacht, but you must do as I say. I'm not a knocker. I don't want to say anything against you. But you take my orders, and make a getaway from here in about two minutes. I want to land that box before daybreak — you understand?"

Smart was about to argue the matter further, but desisted for a few minutes while he had the forestay-sail run up and the jib hoisted. He was swinging around in a large circle, and was now ready to carry head-sail and have his vessel manageable. In the meantime, Bahama Bill was busy some two hundred fathoms distant.

#### IV

When the mate plunged overboard after the thin-faced gentleman, he had a very definite idea of what

he must do. To attempt to retake his ship under the guns of two armed men who were expert at the use of firearms would have been suicide. They would have shot him before he could have taken charge.

He knew Smart to be a good sailor, and had considerable faith in his ability to handle himself properly in an emergency. He felt certain that the captain understood the game, and gave him merely a look to signify that he was ready. Then he had gone over the side for the man who had the six-shooter, feeling sure that the fellow would not let go of the weapon until he had to.

He swam quickly along in the swirl of the wake, keeping his eyes open for the head of the passenger to appear upon the whitened surface. In a moment he saw him.

The thin-faced rogue was a strong swimmer. He was also a powerful man, spare and muscular, capable of taking care of himself in that smooth sea for a long time. He had suddenly found himself flung far over the side by the jibing sheet, but he clutched his pistol firmly, knowing that his partner would take charge until he was safe aboard again.

The weapon was heavy, but he jammed it into his waist-belt and struck out slowly, meaning to swim along easily until the sloop returned to pick him up. He could see her plainly, and he saw Smart start to swing her around to return.

Then he was suddenly aware of a black head and face close aboard him, the head sticking out of the

sea and coming along at a smart pace. At first the sight startled him. He hardly knew what had happened. Then he surmised that the mate had been swept overboard also, and was swimming near for company.

"You got it, too?" he asked, as the head of Bahama Bill came nearer. The answer was a terrific blow between the eyes, which sent the stars sailing through his brain. Then he felt the powerful hands of the giant black closing upon him, and he fought with furious energy to keep free. They clutched and clinched, the mate getting a firm hold of the man's right hand, which he twisted around behind him. The struggle caused them to sink below the surface, and the straining made breathing necessary.

The giant mate swam fiercely to regain the surface, dragging his antagonist along with him. He finally got his head clear, and breathed deeply the salt air of the ocean, spitting out a quantity of salt water.

The thin-faced man had swallowed much brine, and he came up weakly. He still struggled, but he was no match for the black diver. In a few minutes Bahama Bill had his hands secured behind him, and then rolling easily over upon his back, he grasped the fellow by the collar, and proceeded to swim with him in the direction of the *Sea-Horse*, turning his head now and then to keep her whereabouts certain.

He lost her several times in the splash and froth of little seas, which broke again and again over his head, for he swam low and saved his strength, but he



knew that Smart would stand by. Soon he made her out coming along smartly right for him, and he suddenly raised himself and called out loudly:

"Get the small boat over — don't yo' try to pick me up from de sloop," he bawled, in his bull-like tones.

Smart understood, and threw the *Sea-Horse* into the wind, Sam and Heldron heaving the small boat upon the rail, and waiting for her headway to slacken before launching her. Then they dropped her over and sprang aboard.

Somewhere off in the darkness they stopped and pulled the men from the water, but neither Smart nor his passenger could see in just what condition they were rescued. The boat seemed to take a long time over the matter, and when she finally started back the pair on board the *Sea-Horse* saw only the two men, Sam and Heldron, rowing as they had started out.

As the boat came alongside, the pale-eyed man peered over to see if his partner had been rescued. He still held his weapon in readiness for enforcing his orders, intending to push matters rapidly the moment the men were aboard again.

The first intimation he received of anything wrong was a spurt of fire issuing from the bottom of the small boat, accompanied by a loud explosion.

At the same instant a heavy bullet struck him just below the collar-bone, slewing him around and causing his pistol to fall from his hand. The next instant Smart was upon him, and bore him to the deck.

The men clambered aboard, Bahama Bill leading, and in less than five minutes they had the two wor-thies triced up in a shipshape and seamanlike manner, lying upon the after-deck.

The giant mate gave a grunt of approval as he glanced at Smart.

"Yo' suah did de right thing, cap — I reckoned yo' might — but dat was a bad place toe jump a man, out dere in de water; it was dat, fer a fact. Now, yo' Dutchman, yo' Sam, git de grub from de box ob dat invalid, I'm mighty hungry, I kin suah eat a tid-bit — then we'll see how long it takes us toe git in behind Floridy Cape. I s'pose yo' wouldn't mind a bite ob dat good grub yo' brought abo'd, hey, per-fesser?" he asked, addressing the reclining invalid.

"Don't rub it in, cap'n; don't rub it in," said the thin-faced man from his place upon the planks. "You take my advice and let that box alone. It'll take a stick of dynamite to bust it, being as it is made of steel under the outside wood cover. It's a very good safe, and strong. Better let that Dutchman get us a few pounds of that salt pig you have aboard, and some boiled corn. I'll risk the indigestion — and let it go at that."

Before daylight they had landed their prisoners and the safe upon the dock at Miami, and Sam had gone up-town to notify the authorities that the marshal was taking a cruise for his health to the Great Bahama Bank.

"If the vessel had been any good," muttered the

thin-faced, as he was led away, "we'd have made good easily enough. She was a bum ship, mighty poor, and that was what caused the trouble."

"I still has a lot ob faith in her," said Bahama Bill.

## XII

### Journegan's Graft

WHEN Stormalong Journegan found that running a saloon in coöperation with the police had its drawbacks, he turned his attention to more lucrative fields.

"It's no use fooling with such fellows as you," he said one day, "you are sharks, pure blood-sucking sharks, you don't give a fellow half a show to make a living. I'm through with you. I'm done. I sell out to-day. Shanahan might be able to stand you off, he's rough, rough as a file and ready to get into trouble. I'm past that stage of the game. I want to live quietly without so much fuss, so much fracas and so much blackmail. I'm going where brains count for as much as trickery and downright rascality. I'm going where there are some educated Yankees, some Northern men of means who can tell a man when they see him — yes, I'm through with you Conchs and crabs."

After delivering himself he spent several days winding up his affairs at the Cayo Huesso, the beautiful white bar at Key West, converted his belongings into cash and took the steamer for Miami, where he arrived in due course of time. He stood upon the deck of the steamer one morning and watched the rising of the

Florida Cape to the northward, stood and gazed at the beautiful bay of Biscayne, where the Northern tourists had been flocking during the cold weather to fish and hunt in the bright sunshine of the reef. The bay was full of small craft, yachts of all descriptions thronged the dredged harbour and small boats came and went over the bright coral banks which shone varicoloured a few feet beneath the surface in the glare of the torrid sun. Yes, there was some life here, something more than the dull and sullen Conchs, the voracious grafters of the reef city and the straying ship's passenger. Here was Northern capital, Northern progress.

"It looks very good to me," mused Mr. Journegan as he gazed serenely down from the hurricane deck of the Key West steamer.

They passed several vessels he knew. There was the wrecking-sloop, *Sea-Horse* of Key West, the *Silver Bar*, schooner-yacht for charter, and several others. Upon the deck of the wrecker he saw the big black mate, Bahama Bill, sitting smoking his pipe, his muscular shoulders shining like coal in the sunlight, while he rubbed his rheumy eyes, the red-rimmed eyes of a diver in salt water, to see better as he watched the approaching ship. Yes, and there was Captain Smart of the lost Dunn schooner, sitting upon the taffrail fishing. He waved his hand to them as the steamer swung past, the thudding of her paddles drowning his hail of welcome which he called out when abreast.

He landed and made his way to the hotel. He had plenty of money and would live right while he felt like it. There was no reason why he should stint himself in any worldly pleasure. Several thousand dollars would last him some time, and after it was spent — well, he seldom went broke. It was not men of his ability who went broke. Oh, no, money was too easy. He never could see why some people found it hard to get. Get, why it seemed to come to him. He couldn't keep it away. After all, he figured that he must be something of a man to make it so easily when so many strove so hard. Yes, it was brains that made money, brains, not brawn, not toil — foolishness. Well, he was here to see, to watch, to take notice. If there was anything floating about, it was most likely he would pick it up. He couldn't help it.

The gambling-place allowed by the management of the hotel was very well kept. It was surrounded by palms and flowers, and its green tables were made as enticing as human ingenuity allowed. Mr. Journegan found them much to his taste, and as the days slipped by he found that instead of a few thousand dollars in his pockets he had but a scant hundred. He also had a hotel bill running up at something like twenty dollars per day. He awoke slowly to the realization that he must quit the game and hustle for cash. It was about this time that he made the acquaintance of a gentleman from New York who had read much and studied more, deeming the human race a fit problem to devote his mind upon. Mr. Smithe, who insisted

that he had an "e" to his name, found the yarns of Journegan much to his liking. The two met upon the hotel verandas and also at the gaming-tables, and after a few days they began to spar for an opening for personal confidences.

"You know," said the studious Smithe, "that there is an enormous waste of material here. Just look at all that water, that magnificent bay. Don't you know, my dear Journegan, that every pint of sea-water holds a small per cent. of gold, yes, real gold, gold that we are playing for every night, gold that we need to pay our bills with — gold —"

"Are you stung, too?" asked Journegan irrelevantly, interrupting the flow of wisdom.

Mr. Smithe eyed him a moment with some concern.

"You interrupted me — I don't understand you," he said.

"Come down. Is that straight, that gold business? Are you stringing me, or is that a chemical fact?" said Journegan.

"I am not in the habit of lying, my friend. That gold remark is a chemical fact, a truth which can be proven by any one familiar with analytical chemistry —"

"And you're stung, — broke, or whatever you choose to call it — same as me, same as some more of the crowd what follows the spinning-wheel. Smithe, you are the goods, you are the real thing, if you're telling the truth. If that gold yarn of yours is true, we win — see?" interrupted the irrepressible

Journegan, upon whose mind a great light was dawning, a vast glare of an intellectual day.

"You seem a bit nutty," spake the learned Smithe, breaking at last into the speech of his youth. "What the hell has gold in the sea-water to do with us, hey?"

"It grieves me to hear a learned man speak hastily," said the now calm Journegan, "but you are like many learned ones, perfectly helpless when it comes to applying your knowledge to some purpose, to some real use besides that of entertaining a few half-drunken admirers about a table. Man, we're as good as made if you are straight about that gold business. You're known here as the real thing in chemistry, you're something of a 'Smart Alec' among the push. If you can prove that gold is in that sea-water — it's all to the good — leave it all to me — don't waste time asking questions a babykins would laugh at — come away — come away with your uncle, I want to talk with you — come."

It was only two days later that the announcement was made that the celebrated chemist, Mr. Smithe, and his friend and manager, Mr. Journegan, were buying property along the shore for the purpose of establishing a plant for converting the free gold held in solution in the clear water of the reef to a commercial commodity in the shape of gold dust, which same being worth about twenty dollars per ounce in the coin of the realm. The announcement created some surprise, and also some curious comment coupled with amusement, but the two gentlemen maintained such a digni-



fied silence concerning the affair, and declined with such natural modesty to discuss it in any manner or form, that the idle rich, from at first laughing, came to regard them with respect, then with awe, and finally with a desire to a better acquaintance. Mr. Smithe condescended to shake hands with some of the most curious, told them many interesting yarns and anecdotes to hold their attention, and all the time kept his method a mystery, his discovery a thing which was of far too great importance to talk about to strangers.

Journegan with commendable activity secured a small frontage a short distance down the shore. Here he bought a small wharf running out into the bay until a depth of six or seven feet was reached. With some haste he had a small enclosure made, a sort of fish-pound built of small piling and decked over across the middle so that a man could walk upon the boards and gaze down into the liquid depths where the gold undoubtedly was. The whole was screened from the curious gaze by high boarding, and a small door was let into the fish-pound for allowing free access of the tide. It was necessary, he explained, to have the water change freely as it was quickly exhausted of its valuable qualities by the process of electrolysis. The naming of the mysterious current as part of the outfit caused more and more favourable comment upon the part of the curious. Electricity, electricity, oh, how many things unknown and mysterious are relegated to your strange power. Yes, Journegan had heard of electric combs, electric shoes, electric belts,

electric — well, pretty much anything which an honest dealer could not sell upon its merits alone. It sounded well to have the plant run by electricity, convincing, undeniable. Who knew that electricity would not do anything its master might bid it? It was a force in its infancy, a giant unknown, undeveloped. It moved the carriages of the rich. It might just as well separate them from some of their wealth. It depended —

A set of wires was run from the plant furnishing the lights for the town, and they were kept in exaggerated evidence all along the little dock and building at its end. A few bulbs lit the scene at night and caused more comment by those who passed the place after dark, when the noise of workmen within could be heard plainly by the curious. It was Journegan's lay to have the place operated solely at night. He gave it out finally that the night tides were most favourable for work, and also that it was a time when for certain mysterious reasons they could work to better advantage.

In a very few days Mr. Smithe began to let slip a few secrets concerning the plant. It was now working all right, he assured his listeners, and he would not only tell them how the thing was done but would go so far as to show some of the more worthy the entire process. If Mr. Jones, who was a millionaire furniture dealer suffering with tuberculosis, would do him the honour, and Mr. Jackson, a millionaire iron producer with gout, would also go along, he would show

how he produced gold from sea-water, precipitated it, he said, precipitated it upon the end of an electric wire under the surface. They would have refreshments served at the dock, and a negro would carry their things for them. It might take several minutes to wait for the precipitation, and as the night was warm, but damp, he would have their comforts provided for. When this news was spread broadcast it created almost a panic among the people of the town. When two such men of undoubted wealth and position as Mr. Jones and Mr. Jackson were to see the thing in operation it was no longer a thing to doubt, it must certainly be a success. They had been living all their lives upon the very edge of a vast gold mine without knowing it, and now these two strangers were going to enlighten them to the real things of life. It was wonderful, great, they might even get a chance to go into the thing later on. What was the use of toiling when gold could be gotten for the trouble of picking it from the end of a wire.

Mr. Smithe having made this announcement with a confidential air and a manner urbanity itself, sought at once Mr. Journegan.

"I've invited the gents," he announced with warmth, spitting fluently at a spider crawling along the veranda, "but it's up to you to make good. How the thunder we're going to get that piece of gold stuck to the end of that wire while the current is playing upon it, beats me. It took two twenties hammered into a passable nugget to make the bait. Now it's

you to land the men, and fix that bait on the wire. Mind you, it's got to be done right there in that bullpen, right there under their eyes. When the current is turned on it has got to form and become attached to the end of the pole in the water."

"It'll be dead easy, Bo, dead easy. Go take a drink and sleep the afternoon away. You trust in father Bullinger — an' he will see you through. Beat it, I say, and don't come worrying me with such trifles as making gold form on the ends of wires. Gimme somethin' dead easy. If you want to hold my attention explain the philosophy of love, or something like that, but say, don't come around me, you a full-grown man, talking about not being able to make gold form on the end of a wire. Man, you are a strange thing. You know some real facts, but after that you're at sea, clean plumb out to sea without a chart or compass. You've done your share, the hard part, getting the yaps into the game. Hell! that's the whole thing, don't you know it. Getting the yaps interested. After that the game is like stealing taffy from a kid, robbing a babe of its milk. You're on. Go take a snooze. I'll finish this cigar and then attend to the details. I promise to see to the details and if that gold don't form on that wire you may strike me dead for a galoot too drunk to know his name. Git out, Bo. Go take a snooze and leave the rest to your Uncle Rube. Man, I haven't seen such easy graft for years. Why, we'll be rich if we can hold it two months. Rich, I say. Money to burn. Why, half a hundred yaps will

be frantic to cast their bread upon the waters, cast their money into our pockets — and then what — and then — well, the boat leaves here daily for Nassau — thence to — Oh, well, anywhere at all. What's the difference where you are if you have the coin in your clothes. Say, Bo, you're all right. You know a thing or two that's worth knowing, the only thing I can't understand is how you grew up without becoming a millionaire. Can't fathom it, old man, can't fathom it. Say, if I knew as much of the books as you do I'd be in the Standard class all right — very well — So long, sneak."

Mr. Smithe went back into the hotel. He was a bit nervous for one who had spent much time and great trouble ascertaining the value of his fellow men. The scheme seemed now to be futile, for how any one could finish with any hope of success appeared impossible. He gathered together his belongings, made them into a bundle easy for transportation, locked his new and somewhat aggressive trunk after screwing it firmly to the floor, and having finished these necessary preparations for a hurried departure, betook himself to the flowing bowl, which in his case was nothing more or less than a bottle of very bad whiskey furnished by the management of the hotel at two hundred per cent. profit. The draught of alcohol gave him new courage. It warmed the cockles of his heart, a heart that was none too rigorous in its action, but under the influence of the stimulant he drowsed and

thought, dreamed and wondered at the versatility of his friend Mr. Stormalong Journegan.

## II

"Hello, Stormy," growled the mate of the *Sea-Horse*, who was sitting upon the deck of his sloop watching the shore, "seems like you struck it rich fer a fact. Must be a wise one dat guy you goes with."

Journegan had reached the edge of the dock about twenty feet distant from the *Sea-Horse* which was lying off.

"Oh, yes, we make a few thousand dollars a day at that gold plant. 'Tain't much, but it goes," said he.

"Don't suppose you'd chin with such fellers as me no more," said Bill, squirting a stream of tobacco into the sea with a vehemence that told of his opinion of those who became stuck up at success, "but I ain't forgot that last deal you played. I'm glad we got clear with our coin, not as you meant we should, but it goes dat way," and Bahama Bill looked thoughtfully into the distance. He had not forgotten the game at Stormalong's bar at the Cayo Huesso when Captain Smart had been fleeced by the gang of Havana crooks, of which "Skinny Ike" had been the leader. He had reason to remember that night, for it had made it necessary for both him and Smart to get to sea without delay, he himself getting a sore shoulder from the six-shooter of the head crook for his interference. But he had cleaned up the entire crowd, with Smart to

help, and the memory was evidently pleasant, for he smiled as he looked into the distance.

"Come abo'd, Stormy, if you don't mind yo' good clothes. Yo' shuah is gittin' toe be a dude — how you come by dem duds, hey?" he said still smiling. "I don't need toe make yo' acquainted with Cap Smart — yo' remember him — what?"

Journegan remembered Smart very well indeed. He looked at him a moment askance, for he had set out to do up the captain that night in Key West, and would have succeeded but for the interference of the giant mate. He, however, saw the point at once and never alluded to the past, but grasped Smart's hand with vigour and assured him that of all people in the world he was most glad to see the captain doing so well. Smart eyed him coldly, but waited for events to shape themselves, knowing full well that the Conch was not there for idle pastime, but had some ultimate purpose in view which was probably of importance.

Journegan was not long in getting down to business. He had plenty of time, but the anxiety of his accomplice caused him to hurry matters and settle the affair at once.

"I want to get a good diver, Bill," said he, finally. "I want a man who will work for twenty dollars an hour in shallow water. Yes, I want a man who can work at a little depth of six or seven feet and do what he's told without asking questions — do you know of any one?"

"Yep, there's Sam — he kin work at that depth,

an' I reckon he'll do it for twenty an hour, an' not squeal," said the mate of the *Sea-Horse*, his ugly face wrinkling into a strange smile and his rheumy eyes turning slowly upon Journegan, fixing him with a curious squinting look which seemed to go clear through him.

"Don't you think you could do the trick for me?" asked Journegan pointedly.

"Nix, not fo' dat little money. Why, man, we're just waitin' fo' a few thousand dollars on some ammunition we salved from the wreck ob de *Bulldog*, brig — out on de Bank two weeks ago. No, if yo' kin pay a man's wages I might get toe work fo' yo', but don't come around heah, Mr. Journegan, with them clothes on an' ask me, me, Bahama Bill, toe work fo' nothin' — Nix, I say nix — don't keep up de conversation — I don't want toe hear no mo'."

The mate of the *Sea-Horse* had received a lesson in regard to pay only a short time before from Smart when they had been chartered by a stranger. He was not slow to learn, and he knew that if Journegan would pay twenty dollars an hour he would pay a hundred — if he had it. There must be some necessity for urgent work — some work perhaps upon the gold plant down the bay which needed repair at once, or there might be a corresponding loss of metal. He had heard of the outfit, and had laughed when he found out it was Stormalong Journegan who was mixed up in it. The name of the chemist was unknown to him,



but he thought it might well be that the Northerner had really found something worth working.

"I'll make it fifty an hour — only working one hour a night — how's that?" asked Journegan. "Work one hour and do as you're told and you get fifty — get the money in advance — what?"

"Yo' make me tired, Stormy. I knows yo' fo' a good business man, I seen dat at de Cayo Huesso, but don't come abo'd heah an' begin fool talk. Cap'n Smart heah is my partner, jest now, — he wouldn't let me work fo' dat price." And the big mate rose as though to go below.

Smart looked at Journegan with a cold eye. He knew the fellow, but he knew also that they were both dead broke, that their money from the salvaged cargo was no nearer than it had been the day they arrived in port. It might be a month or two before they received anything on their diving. The ammunition had to be tested and there was no use hurrying matters. That it would be good, there was not the least doubt, but it had been in the hold of the brig completely submerged for some time, so long in fact that it had been abandoned by the first wrecking crew, composed of the *Sea-Horse* men and the steam tug from Key West. Yes, fifty dollars an hour might get something to eat while they waited the leisure of the agents of the ammunition house buying the stuff. Fifty dollars was good pay, and he knew he could not afford to let the mate pass it for any personal matter that might exist between himself and Journegan. He watched

the pair steadily and when Bahama Bill showed signs of giving it up he spoke out.

"Better take it on, Bill," he said, as the giant stretched himself at the companionway. "I know you're worth more'n that to Mr. Journegan, but I think you might take it on for a few days."

"De hell yo' do," quoth the mate, glaring at him.

"I'll make it seventy-five," said Journegan, "that's as high as I'll go."

"Well, so long as Cap'n Smart say do it, I'll jest take it on dat figure," said the mate. "What's de lay?"

"The process of extracting gold from sea-water is a secret one, my dear Bill," said Mr. Journegan. "I really don't quite know the manner of doing it myself. You will come up to the hotel in about an hour and a half, or before sundown, and Mr. Smithe, the chemist, the brains of the plant, will give you your instructions. You had better come alone, and before you make the deal I want you, of course, to promise that you will not tell of anything — not a thing you see in the plant — understand. The process is patented, but if every one knew it there would be no reason in the world why anybody couldn't get money the same way."

"Dat seems fair enough," assented Bill. "Ob co'se I kin see somethings dere, but I promise not toe tell de neighbours — yep, it goes at dat — I'll be up toe de swell shack befo' dark — so-long."

Mr. Journegan stepped into the small boat and a moment later was walking leisurely up the road to his

rooms at the hotel. He could count on the success of Mr. Smithe's scheme to a certainty and the knowledge gave him much pleasure. It had been quite easy, only that shark of the reef, Bahama Bill, had robbed him. He cursed the avaricious mate, cursed him freely and fluently for his greed, but in the end he laughed, for was not the gold plant to be a great success. Bah, a few hundred dollars one way or the other was not to be considered. He and his partner had 'enough for a few days yet, and by then they would be rich men. He made his way to the rooms of Mr. Smithe, knocked at the door and was confronted with a six-shooter held in that brainy gentleman's hand.

"Aw, gwan — put it up," said Journegan.

Mr. Smithe quickly did so. The knock had aroused him from pleasant reveries to an acute appreciation of the present. He saw the form of the marshal at his door and with trembling fingers he seized his gun for a last stand. It had been something of a relief to find his accomplice standing there with a complacent smile upon his face, his long six feet three of skin and bone fairly shaking with laughter.

Journegan entered unbidden and quickly closed the door.

"It's all right, Bo, the deed is done. I have the means at hand. They will be here shortly. Let's have a drink?" he said.

Mr. Smithe acquiesced, and over the liquor the plan was gone over to the mutual satisfaction of both.

"Gad, but you're not so bad, Mr. Journegan," said

the brainy Smithe. "You have executive ability to a marked degree. You have imagination, a thoughtful mind—oh, if it had only been trained in its youth—"

"Skin it, Bo," said Journegan, "don't make me feel badly. I have seen things in my day, things just as instructive as anything you get out of text-books, even chemistry. Have another drink. My man will be here very soon. Don't go around packing that light artillery. It won't do if we're caught up suddenly. What would the Muldoons think if they found us going around this peaceful hostelry armed with Gatlings of forty-five calibre. No, put on your best duds and come away. We've won — mark what I say — we've won. I have the best diver on the Great Bahama Bank to do the trick, the best and biggest man on the reef — see. It's all right. Now, then, I hear his gentle footsteps on the veranda and I think we had better get him in here without delay — what?"

Half an hour later the mate of the *Sea-Horse* emerged from the room with a faint smile upon his ugly face. He strode forth quickly and made his way to the water-front, getting into a small boat waiting for him and starting down the bay in the direction of the gold plant.

It was about eight in the evening, after supper at the hotel, that the party set out in a gasoline launch for the dock where the gold plant was located. The evening was fine and the western sky still showed the last faint tints of the setting sun. Darkness came apace and the cool sea-breeze made the ride very pleas-

ant, the boat rushing through the water leaving a long, bright wake, flaring here and there with phosphorescence where the screw turned the water and sent it whirling astern. By the time they reached the dock it was quite dark, so dark in fact that the shadow of the wharf loomed dimly above the tide. The launch was made fast at the steps and the party climbed up into the enclosure.

"It is an ideal evening for our work," said Mr. Smithe to Mr. Jackson. "The tide is right and there seems to be no sea, no extraordinary commotion which might interfere with the chemical result. It is generally best to work on calm nights, but the process will obtain under each and every condition the weather permits. Allow me to light up." So saying he switched on the electric lights and the enclosure was lit up dimly.

"Seems like you might have had a few more lamps," said Mr. Jones a little testily. "It'll be hard to see anything with just two sixteen-candle bulbs."

"I shall have that attended to at once," said Mr. Journegan. "You see we have been so busy with the results that we seldom miss the lights to any extent. The same current that lights up the place is used for forming the precipitate upon the wire — the gold precipitate, you understand."

"Well, let her commence," said Mr. Jackson, a little unfavourably impressed at the stillness and peculiar surroundings of the outfit. "I'll sit here on this box and wait — I hope it won't be long, but I must say

that if you men can do this thing, you certainly can do something no one else has ever attempted in history — mind you, I don't say you won't do it, but I say commence, I want to see with my own eyes."

Mr. Smithe, with great deliberation and some complex manœuvring, took up a wire and wrapped it in a cloth. He then fastened it with a small piece of copper wire and dipped the whole into a strong solution of something that had a most offensive odour.

"You see, gentlemen," said he, "the contents of this basin," — here he pointed to the mixture which had such a terrific odour. "This is the secret part of the whole process, it produces the electrolysis which causes the gold to form upon the positive pole of the current. I shall now toss it overboard and we will await results."

He threw the wire over the edge of the enclosure and it disappeared at once in the black depths below. The white cloth tied to the end still showed faintly at a depth of six feet below the surface.

"I now shall start the current," he said, and taking up a hammer he struck savagely upon the flooring of the dock several time. There was a faint sound from shoreward, the sound of a gentle splashing, but this soon subsided. Suddenly a commotion in the water below attracted the attention of Mr. Jones. A large fish appeared to break water at the entrance of the enclosure. Then it disappeared, and Mr. Journegan remarked that the small sharks of the reef were most numerous at this season.

Mr. Smithe watched the surface of the water carefully. A huge dark shadow glided beneath him towards the end of the wire which held the white cloth.

"I must have more current," he called petulantly to Mr. Journegan, "give me more current for a few minutes, this wire is cold."

For answer Journegan switched off the lights for a few seconds. Mr. Jones and Mr. Jackson watched the water steadily, but nothing broke its now black surface.

"It's getting warm now," called Mr. Smithe, and on the instant Journegan switched on the lights again. They all sat there for some minutes awaiting the result, but the water gave no token save that now the cloth had disappeared from the end of the wire and as the minutes dragged by Mr. Smithe called attention to this fact.

"You see, it has begun to work," he called, pointing below at the invisible wire. "In a moment I shall pull it up—a few dollars worth of metal is all we need wait for to-night. I have an engagement at the Casino at ten."

Suddenly he pulled up the wire. Upon its end, fixed fast and apparently imbedded, was a small mass of a peculiar metal, bright, shiny and unmistakably gold. Yes, he had done it. He had made the sea give up its own. There it was, gold, pure gold in an ingot worth about forty dollars. The astounded Mr. Jones gazed in wonder. The skeptical Mr. Jackson let his

eyes open wide. It was certainly the wonder of the era. It was tremendous.

"You can take this specimen and have it assayed," said Mr. Smithe, handing the nugget to Mr. Jackson; "you can return it at your convenience."

When Mr. Smithe struck the blows with the hammer, thereby causing the current to flow, it roused Bahama Bill from his drowsing in the bottom of a small boat close to the shore. He grinned and arose. He had been told just what to do and paid heavily for keeping his mouth shut about doing it. It was none of his business why they did these things, it was his business to dive for money, no matter what the affair. He was well paid and he saw no reason why he should not take the money. A man of more refined mind would have possibly refused the work, but Bahama Bill was brought up in the school where it was necessary to live, necessary to have the means to live without going too far outside the rules of the game. It was Journegan's business to make gold out of seawater. It was his to do a bit of diving for him and perform certain feats which might or might not affect the pockets of the gentlemen now waiting to see the result. There were so many questionable ways of separating folks from their coin that he was amused at the graft of these two. At the gambling house kept by the pious and strict manager of the hotel, there were many ways of separating folks from their cash. It had the sanction of the "Boss" — that was the only difference he could see in the matter. He was a plain



wrecker, a man who made his living from the misfortunes of others. Yet it was a legitimate business, and he generally played fair. He was simply a big, powerful man, a giant diver of the Bank. He dropped his trousers and stood forth naked in the darkness as the last banging of the hammer died away. It was the signal agreed upon and without a moment's hesitation he made a long clean dive into the dark water. Coming to the surface he swam quickly and noiselessly toward the end of the dock where the gate, or opening in the piling, would allow him to get within the enclosure. He was a little doubtful of finding the end of the wire, as he had been instructed to, but he thought the white cloth might make it visible, for the water was very clear.

He never fancied swimming at night over the coral banks, for there were always many denizens of the ocean that came in and either rested or fed during the hours of darkness. Many a big shark lay log-wise in the waters of the reef during the night, waiting for a rush upon the feeding mullet or other small fry. He had found sharks always dangerous at this season of the year, and he was now without even a knife. However, he managed to reach opposite the opening without mishap. Then he floated silently and took a few deep breaths for the work in hand.

He could hear the voices of the men within the enclosure and he heard Mr. Smithe announce that the wire was ready. He was just about to dive when a disturbance in the sea close to him made him hesitate

and turn. A triangular fin cut the surface not two fathoms distant. It was that of a gigantic shark. Instantly the diver went under and strove with mighty strokes to gain the opening in the piling. He felt instinctively that the monster would follow him, but it was the nearest place of refuge. Guided solely by memory of direction, he fairly tore through the water, struck the opening with his hand and with a mighty effort swung himself within, remaining under and shooting ahead with the momentum of his flight. A commotion, a sweep of a strong current at the gate told of a passing heavy body, but nothing touched him. He could not hold his breath much longer on account of the sudden effort, and he was sworn not to come to the surface within the piles. It was at this moment that Mr. Smithe, seeing something of what had occurred by the shadows beneath the surface, called for more electricity, and Journegan with his rare presence of mind switched off the lights. Bahama Bill came to the surface gently, and had it not been for the noisy conversation of Smithe, his deep breathing would surely have made his presence known to all. As it was he lay upon his back, close within the shadow of the piling and just let his nose come into the air. In a few moments he had regained his wind and sank downward to the end of the wire. Then Mr. Smithe switched on the light and announced that the wire was warm. It was a close call, close in more ways than one, but the mate had made good, he had done his part. He saw the white cloth without diffi-

culty and attached the piece of gold. Then he fled for the open with a courage which might have called forth the admiration of the watchers had they known his danger.

Once clear, he swam silently and with all his strength for the small boat. The feeling that something was pursuing him kept him nerved to the utmost. He fairly tore through the sea, but only raised his head every twenty to thirty feet to breathe. He swam almost all the way under water. This he knew was the safest, for the predatory denizens of the coral banks depend as much on hearing, or a sense akin to it, as on sight. The feeling that something still followed drove him along at his top speed, but he could see nothing, know nothing of its shape or form. It was just the instinctive fear, or nerve straining one feels in the dark where danger lurks. He gained the small boat quickly and at that instant a great shadow swept past leaving a trail of phosphorescent fire in its wake.

"If you gentlemen are satisfied, we will now go back to the hotel," said Mr. Smithe with his most urbane manner. "If at any other time you would like a renewal of the test, we shall be only too glad to give it, provided of course, neither you nor your guests talk of the process and thus set curious people at work to find out our secret."

Amid murmurs of approval and congratulations, the party broke up and started back in the launch, Mr. Journegan especially active in getting away from the dock and explaining vehemently the reason that the

extraction had not been made before was that it took a man with brains and one with executive ability to work a thing like that together, to a successful conclusion.

Before twenty-four hours had elapsed there had been a company formed with Mr. Smithe at its head, and there had been twenty-five thousand dollars in ready cash put at its disposal in the town bank for the purpose of carrying on the experiments and continuing the production of gold from the waters of the Bay of Biscayne.

Twice during the week following the experiment was repeated with equal success. The cloth disappeared from the wire and the gold was found upon the pole. It was astounding, but there was no way of contradicting the evidence of the senses. There was the gold. That was enough for many — gold, gold, gold. The thing took like wild-fire. The news was spread broadcast, and Bahama Bill sat in the mornings reading the papers with a grin of derision upon his big ugly face.

"Of course, it's none of my business," said Smart, "but if you're wise you'll not go into any crooked game. It's all well enough to repair their outfit, but if you're in anything crooked, you're not playing fair with me."

"Yo' wanted me toe go into it," growled the mate.

"I dun promised not to gib way nuthin' — fo' a big stake. Yous livin' high on fresh beef and good whack, Sam and Heldron is paid off and everythin'

seems all right. 'Tain't none of mah business what those fellows do — I'm jest doin' what I agreed to — jest divin' — divin' — see."

"Better quit it when you've got enough to lay by with until we make our deal," said Smart. "Of course you can't tell me what you do, what your lay is down at the plant?"

"I dun passed mah word," said Bahama Bill gravely. "I ain't playin' straight, but I dun passed mah word —"

"Could you give an exhibition of the part you play?" asked the sailor.

The big mate thought a moment. He did not seem to like the idea, it was not fair according to his standpoint of honour. He had his limitations, but he generally did what he said he would. At the same time he knew he was getting into a game which would cause him trouble in the end if he did not get out quickly. The thing was too good to last.

"Yep, — I — might," he finally said, grinning.

"I'll get some of the gentlemen down to the plant in the small boat and let them see, for I for one don't take much stock in that fellow who tried to skin me in his barroom to the southward," said Smart.

"Git 'em any time yo' see fit — I'll do the part I generally does," said the mate.

Smart dressed and went to the hotel. It was afternoon and the two partners in the gold plant were at the tables playing heavily. They were somewhat at ease as to their finances, for the thing was a veritable

gold mine in fact. They knew nothing of the departure of Mr. Jones and Mr. Jackson in company with Smart and Bahama Bill, rowing down the shore in the small boat of the *Sea-Horse*. Reaching the dock, Smart had little difficulty in effecting a landing at the enclosure and of making an entrance. There was no lock upon the door, for there was nothing to secure, and the four men were soon within the sacred precincts of the gold plant.

"Which is the wire?" asked Smart of Mr. Jones. The gentleman explained.

"Was there anything on it?" he asked.

Mr. Jones said there was something like a bit of cloth. Smart tied a piece to it.

"Now, Bill, do what you generally do," said the captain.

The big mate grinned. He was undecided as to whether he was acting fairly with those who had employed him. Then he sprang into the small boat and rowed away a short distance. The three within the place waited.

Suddenly Smart called attention to a shadow approaching under the surface of the water. It came quickly within the gate of the pound, and although it was deep below the surface all had no difficulty in recognizing the giant form of Bahama Bill. The great black diver swam quickly to the end of the wire, pulled off the cloth and attached something in its place, going away instantly with powerful strokes. He was within the enclosure but a minute altogether and as

he went rapidly through the water-gate into the open bay, he broke the surface just a little with one huge ham-like foot.

"As a swimming feat, that was the best exhibition I ever saw," said Jones to his friend. "In the night time it was wonderful. That white cloth was there for an excellent purpose, but even in that clear water it must have been hard to have picked it up to a certainty in the dark. I suppose the sooner we get the news to the marshal the better it will be for all hands. I for one am not very much ashamed of myself."

"Nor I," said Mr. Jackson.

"You will understand," said Smart, "that neither my mate nor myself had anything to do with the game further than to obey orders and accept pay for diving."

"You will neither be mentioned nor asked to appear — no matter what happens," assured Mr. Jones. "We will make this discovery ourselves. It is due us as intelligent men — eh?" he added to Mr. Jackson. That gentleman agreed with vigour.

Stormalong Journegan had lost heavily at the wheel, the seductive roulette. He said very little, but arose before his accomplice and going to the bank drew out nearly the whole amount to the credit of the company. As it happened the whistle of the Nassau steamer was blowing its first warning blast for the people to get ashore who were not going to sea within a few minutes. Journegan noticed it and walked along the water-front. As he went his way he noticed the small boat of the *Sea-Horse* with Mr. Jones, Mr. Jackson,

Smart and — yes, there was no mistake — Bahama Bill. The giant mate was rowing and sending the craft along with sweeping strokes. Stormalong Journegan looked but for a moment more. Then he ran with all the speed his long legs could give for the steamer. He reached her just as she was pulling out from the wharf and managed to make the jump aboard without creating comment. He instantly made his way to the lavatory, where he remained for at least an hour, washing and rewashing his hands. When he appeared on deck the steamer was well down the channel standing for the open sea. He was never seen again after landing the next morning at Nassau.

Mr. Smithe was aroused by a knock at his door some time that afternoon and he called out affably to the person to enter, thinking it his energetic partner, Mr. Journegan, whom he had missed for several hours. The marshal entered, and Mr. Smithe had the satisfaction of seeing his trusty gun lying safe and snug in his bureau drawer.

“You can raise your hands, Mr. Smithe,” said the officer of the law.

Mr. Jones waited not very long before paying his hotel bill. He proceeded to the writing-room and wrote a short note home, telling of his marked improvement, his ability to travel alone, and that he would soon be North again. “I have been taking the gold cure,” said he as he ended his letter, leaving his family very much disturbed.

Mr. Jackson found urgent business calling him



North the next day. He declined to be interviewed. "In the interest of science, I shall keep the secret of the chemical precipitation of gold in sea-water," he said. "It is a wonderful discovery."

Bahama Bill sat and grinned in the morning as he read the news in the daily paper. Captain Smart felt easier in his mind.

"That man, Journegan, surely was a fellow of ability," he said. "He has cleared — gone clean away on the ship for Nassau — but I don't think he will ever come back."

"'Tain't likely," grunted Bahama Bill. "No, it won't do for him toe come along dis way agin — if yo' don't mind, cap, I'll git yo' toe write me a letter to my wife — fightin' Jule — I reckon I better be gittin' some ob dishear money down toe her, or she'll be a-coming along up heah fo' toe take a look at things. — I see dat Mr. Smithe has been let go — no one to prosecute him — toe bad, toe bad."

## XIII

### Shanghaing the Tong

CAPTAIN SMART sat upon the deck of the wrecking-sloop *Sea-Horse*, and read a letter from the agents of the cartridge company which had furnished the ammunition to the *Bulldog*, brig, wrecked some time before upon the Great Bahama Bank. It caused him some uneasiness, for he scowled and wrinkled his brow, read and re-read it until the giant black mate, Bahama Bill, could keep back his curiosity no longer.

"What is it, cap? What dat guy say? No use keepin' bad news back. I kin stan' it, I reckon. Let's have his lay — ain't dat cartridge case no good?"

"He says," began Smart, "that the samples are good, that the cases are all right, and he will take the ten tons, about three hundred thousand rounds, at a cent and a half, the cartridges retailing at three cents, or thirty dollars per thousand. That nets us four thousand five hundred, or a little over two thousand dollars apiece for our day's work —"

"Well, dat ain't so bad — no, dat's all toe de good, hey?"

"So far, yes," said Smart, "but the railroad won't carry them under three hundred dollars, and won't give

any guarantee that they'll be delivered on time; won't insure them — in fact, won't do anything but carry them at an exorbitant rate, and they say they must have the goods within one week from the eighth of this month, or upon the fifteenth. Otherwise they won't fill the order, they don't want them. It's now the tenth — that's the rub. How are we going to make good? Shall we trust to the railroad? It never does what it agrees to, and in this case we look like bad ones. That's what's worrying me. What do you say? You're half-partner — it's up to you, Bill."

The big black mate sat looking at the shore for some minutes. His ugly face was wrinkled and his rheumy eyes were puckered in thought, his huge shoulders hunching up, and giving him the air of one who has struck a problem too great to solve. Finally he spoke.

"Jule will be along on the morning boat," said he solemnly.

"Who is Jule?" asked Smart.

"Jule? Why, I thought you knew, cap — why, Jule is my wife. 'Fightin' Jule' deys calls her, an' I reckon dat's a good name. She got dat letter you wrote, and de money I sent from de diving at de gold plant. She dun heard ob dat gold plant, an' she's comin' on up. She'll be here in about an hour."

"You think she can give us good advice — is that it?" suggested Smart, eying the big mate keenly.

"Er — er — dat ain't exactly what I was thinkin' — no, sah, cap," said Bahama Bill, with a sickly grin.

"I'm not a mind-reader, Bill," said Smart.

"Well, sah, cap — seein' as it's you, well, sah — er — er — well, I don't know but what we better make de run toe Noo York ourselves. Or else back toe Key West, an' ketch de Noo York steamer. She kin make de run in three days; dat'll do de trick, hey?"

"Has your wife brought her children with her?" asked Smart.

"Oh, no, cap, she always leaves dem with her ma when she starts off on de rampage ——"

"I see; you're afraid of her," said Smart, smiling.

"Not eggzactly dat, cap; not eggzactly — I ain't afeared ob nothin'; no, sah, dat I ain't, but she shuah do make me nervous; she shuah do make me feel — well, I jest don't know how, but it'll be best fo' you — fo' you, cap — if we start fo' Noo York before she gits here. Yo' understand?"

Captain Smart thought a moment. He had heard of Bahama Bill's wife, the well but not favourably known "Fighting Jule," of Key West. On the whole, it was worth considering. They might make the run in five or six days. It had been done before, but not often. The *Sea-Horse* was an able sloop, but that was testing her too much. The great six-masters had made the run to Havana in five days, two hundred miles farther on, but they seldom did it in ten. It was a great risk; a risk which might end up in the loss of the entire consignment, for they might not be able to get another chance for a sale.

On the other hand, there was *Key West*, the New York steamer, which would be due the next morning, and she would take the freight at proper prices, and be sure to land it in town — she couldn't help it, making the run North in three days to a certainty. The *Key West* run seemed to be the best one, but there were certain other considerations which had to be thought of.

"How about *Key West*?" asked Smart. "Do you think we could run in after that fracas at Journegan's bar? Won't the police want us pretty bad if they think they can shake us down for a thousand dollars?"

"I shuah think dey will dat," assented the mate, "if dey think we got anything. Dey certainly trim de folks right smart down dere. I reckon you're right, 'tain't no place fo' us wid a cargo of ca'tridges. I reckon you're wise; I reckon we'd better be gittin' farther No'th."

"There's the New York ship from Jacksonville — how's that?" asked Smart. "We can make that run in two days with a good wind ——"

"Git de mainsail on her — Sam, Heldron — lay aft, yo fellers," said Bahama Bill, springing to action. "We'll catch de Saturday ship, an' git de stuff in town in plenty o' time — dat's de lay — Jacksonville — an' dere's de smoke o' de *Key West* comin' up de Hawk's Channel — see him?" And he pointed to the southward.

"I'll go ashore and get my clothes. They're at the

Chinese laundry," said Smart, jumping into the small boat.

"Yo' want toe hurry up — we ain't got no time toe lose. Git my shirts, too, cap. I dun left 'em with de Chink las' week — an' git a five-poun' ham on de way back, we'll need a bit o' grub —— "

Smart was already rowing briskly toward the shore, where he landed and made his way rapidly up the street. Wah Lee, the Chinaman who ran the laundry, stood within his doorway and gazed with mild amazement at the unwonted gait of the seaman. Fast walking was not the habit of the Florida cracker, and to see a man sprint along at Smart's gait aroused the suspicion that he was either making a "getaway" from some one or something, or was bent upon most important business.

"He allee samee good mans," said Wah Lee, to one of his numerous brothers ironing a shirt. "Wachee mee skinee him — allee samee bunk. Him sailor fell! Him gotee mon, mon, mon. Me con mans, allee samee bunk. Ha! ha! You see."

Smart stepped into the shanty with a brisk step.

"Get the clothes up, John. Get 'em tied fast right away — all, Bahama Bill's and mine both — hurry, you savvy? Hurry." And the sailor handed over his slip.

"You go to sea to-day?" asked the active Lee, scurrying around behind his counter and trying to match the slip of paper with its strange characters to one of the many bundles already tied fast with white

twine, and laid carefully upon the shelves along the walls.

"Yes; sail in a minute — hurry up. Got to get to sea before the steamer gets in — "

"Ah! Allee same good — you take him. Two dolla' fifteen cent."

"What! For just three shirts and two ducks? You are a robber."

"Two dolla' fifteen cent, allee right — you pay him — no shirt, no pay him," said the usurious Lee, lowering truculently at the skipper. One of his brothers sniggered.

When a Celestial sniggers at a white man it is bad. Especially if the white man happens to be a sailor — and in a hurry. Just what makes the Easterner an inferior is not quite definite, not quite clear to the socialistic mind, but that he is inferior is generally conceded — among white men. Among the Orientals there is a quite different opinion based upon their point of view, which, when discussed from its ethical standpoint, is not illogical or unreasonable. Sailors seldom are analytical, seldom go into the reason of things; they are content to accept them as they are, or as they appear to be. Therefore, Smart was much wroth at the sniggering Chink, the more so because he knew he was being cheated by Wah Lee in his wash bill.

But Wah Lee was a hatchetman. He was a leader of the Hip Sing Tong, and a very bad Chinese to fool with. He was in Florida only for his health, not for gain; and the fact that gain came his way was inci-

dental. He took advantage of it. His little ratlike eyes glinted strangely as he spoke his soft sing-song speech.

"Two dolla' fiftee cent — no shirt, no pay — you savvy?" he drawled.

"Come, come, John, be quick about it, and don't put up any foolishness — I haven't time to play this morning," said Smart quickly. "Get the clothes or I'll wade in and take charge of some of those on the shelves."

"You pay two dolla' fiftee cent — you no' pay right off you pay tlee dolla' slixty cent," sang Mr. Wah Lee, his eyes still narrowing, and his hands feeling softly in among his sleeves, where he kept his weapons; "I no time to foolish mans."

"You're on the 'bunk,' then," said Smart; "is that it?"

"Two dolla' fiftee cent, or ——"

His answer was quickly given. Smart swung for his jaw, and landed full upon the Oriental chin. Wah Lee went to the floor with a crash, bringing down an ironing-board with him; the flat-irons, clothes, and other gear rolling in a mess. He drew a huge, blue-barrelled gun from his sleeve, and, while he lay supine, levelled it at the sailor. Smart missed getting the shot by a hair, and managed to land a kick upon Lee's pistol-arm before the furious Chink could fire, whereupon not less than four powerful hatchetmen, trained athletes from the Orient, sprang upon him at once.

The seaman was dumfounded at the assault. A



Chink was beneath contempt, and to find oneself beset by several powerful Orientals, who were more than his match, was simply heart-breaking, pride-destroying. He swung right and left, furiously clinched, and the five of them rolled with a surging smash against the counter, breaking it down in a mass of splinters, sending clothes, boards, and other laundry paraphernalia in all directions.

One of the men let out a shrill yell, and the two not fighting sprang to the doors and slammed them fast. It would not do to let the populace of the town see the fracas. A Chinaman never advertises the fact that he is a fighter, and is never glad to have it found out, especially among Americans. Besides, had not the foreign pig struck down their leader, the most high Wah Lee, and had not the august Lee essayed to kill the pig — was he not doomed?

Yet none of them wished to act as executioner without direct and explicit orders from the chief. This was a poor country to kill a man in, his friends always made such a fuss; and the police with clubs always made it bad, impossible to hide for a very long time. A rope and a neighbouring tree were the usual finishing touches if they failed to find the lost one.

Smart fought with a fury born of broken pride, lost self-esteem. He was degraded, lowered to the level of common Chinks, and he gave short-arm jolts with amazing lifting power begotten of many years' hard hauling upon lines.

With both hands and feet he strove wildly to free

himself from the tangle of baggy sleeves, cotton trousers, and yellow arms. The mass of struggling men rolled and surged over the floor. Smart raised himself again and again to his knees, striking, punching, clinching, using elbows, feet, and knees; and the tide of struggling forms flowed across the room, demolishing everything in its path.

Wah Lee tried in vain to use his gun, and a fellow ruffian tried to strike with the deadly little hatchet used for such occasions, but ever and again the pile of struggling arms, legs, and bodies prevented. The noise of the struggle was drowned in the shrill curses of the contestants, while the sailor fought silently like a bulldog, gripping, smashing, kicking, and flinging the mass about in the vain hope to throw them off enough to get in a full arm-stroke from his fists. If he could but strike a full swing once or twice he felt sure of the outcome, for a Chinaman will seldom stand to a full-arm stroke upon the jaw.

Wah Lee, seeing that to shoot was to endanger his men, dropped his gun into his cash-drawer, and fell foul of the bunch to try to do his share in overcoming the foreign pig. His remaining followers seeing him, flung themselves into the pile, and the mass of men was increased.

Smart began to feel the extra weight of numbers. He was growing tired, and, in spite of his excellent wind, was panting hoarsely, his breathing hampered considerably by gripping fingers he was forced to tear time and again from his throat. He raised himself to

his knee for the last giant effort. His heart was breaking. He smashed wildly, furiously; plunged, bucked, threw himself about, twisting, turning, striving with the last remnant of his dying strength. Then he gradually gave way, growing weaker, fighting slower, sinking gradually down, while the pile of men fastened their grips upon him for the finish. In a few moments he was lying limp, and the panting Celestials rose, one after the other, to their feet, while Wah Lee passed a line about the sailor's arms and legs, making him secure.

It had been a most excellent affair; a most magnificent affray worthy of a sailor striving for his rights; and Wah Lee gazed with narrowing eye at the form while he panted out his losses to the surrounding brothers of his Tong. The entire front of the laundry was swept bare, the ironing-boards smashed, the clothes in masses of rags; bundles and papers rolled and mixed in confusion. Flat-irons, holders, chairs, and shelves arranged themselves in piles as though an earthquake had swept through the place; and, while Lee looked sadly at the wreck, he murmured: "Two dolla' fiftee cent."

It had been a bad business for the Chinaman. He had made another mistake, but he would wreak his vengeance at will now upon the helpless Smart. Hot irons, melted lead, and quicklime were some of the items running through his furious mind, and just when and how he would use them upon his victim. He would have to wait to see if the white pig had

many friends, who might make a thorough search, but sailors, as a rule, had no friends at all; they were soon forgotten — then he would go to work.

In the meantime he would place the seaman where the mosquitoes would not trouble him, after first relieving him of any unnecessary valuables he might have upon his despicable person.

Into a filthy den he carried the now insensible Smart, casting him into a foul bunk, which had been used by a smoker of the drug common to the Chinese coolie, and carefully covering him, so that no one would notice the form even should the retreat be discovered. Then he set about with his helpers to straighten up the shop.

## PART II

During the period of time Smart spent in serious argument with the august Lee, Bahama Bill fretted and fumed about the deck of the wrecking-sloop, *Sea-Horse*. Sam and Heldron both came in for a dressing, and both narrowly escaped getting a morning bath, for the big black mate was in a passion at the delay. The steamer from Key West came to the dock, and a form — the unmistakable form of "Fightin' Jule" — stepped ashore, and moved with no uncertain stride in the direction of the *Sea-Horse*.

Bahama Bill grunted forth anathemas, and sprang into the small boat to gain the wharf before his spouse could intercept him. He felt there might be something doing. When he arrived at the landing he

looked up, and gazed right into the eyes of his partner.

"Huccum yo' toe git heah, Jule?" asked Bahama Bill.

"I come wid de boat, shuah, nigger. How yo' think I come — swim? I come toe see just what yo' doin'; why yo' don't come home. I knows yo', Bill, yo' been runnin' wid some trashy nigger gal up heah —"

"It ain't so, Jule —"

"Don't yo' contradict me, nigger. I *knows* you. You ain't sent me all dat money fer nothin'; yo' ain't done it fo' no reason 'cept toe try toe make me think yo' keers fo' me. Don't yo' make me mad."

"But, Jule, I got ter git toe sea right away. I ain't done nothin' but gib up de dough fast as I makes it. Got a cargo ob ca'tridges now abo'd, an' got toe git dem No'th right away. I jest come heah toe see you an' git de partner I got in de deal. I sho' nuff glad toe see yo', Jule."

"Don' yo' gib me none o' yo' foolishness, Bill. I knows yo'. I tells yo' I *knows* yo', an' I'll set right heah tel yo' gits de partner an' gits ready toe go abo'd dat sloop — I wants to see de kind o' partner yo' has. Don' talk toe me. Ef I wasn't a lady, I'd knock yo' blame' haid off. Gwan!"

Bahama Bill was much disturbed, and he went up the street in no pleasant frame of mind. His wife he knew would stay right in sight of the sloop until the sloop sailed, and the indications were she'd want to go along with him. It was very disturbing to a

man of the mate's temperament. He went along as a man much occupied with his thoughts, and looked neither to the right nor left until he reached the main street. Here he met a sailor from a yacht lying in the harbour, and he asked him if he had seen anything of Smart.

"Yo' knows a yacht feller when yo' see him, I reckon; have yo' seen dat Cap'n Smart?" he said.

"I saw your captain going toward the laundry about an hour ago," said the sailor.

Bahama Bill went into a saloon and took a drink. Where could Smart have gone, except on a drunk, after going to the laundry. He eyed the barkeeper sourly, and asked him if he had seen his sailor partner.

"Sure," said the man of drinks, handing out a square-faced bottle and a glass. "He stopped over across the way to the Chink's — heard something of a fracas going on over in that direction — shouldn't wonder if he beat up the heathen, only that Wah Lee is a corker; a sure winner for a yaller skin."

"What yo' mean?" asked Bill.

"I means that the Chink is a scrapper — kin do 'em up; carries a Gatling gun in his sleeve. He's only here for a few months in the winter. Belongs to the Hip Sing Tong, or some secret society in New York. He's something like Fat Duck, or Bill Puck, or some sech Chink I reads of in th' papers what does up whole theatres full o' them yaller bellies."

"Gimme another drink," said Bahama Bill, meditatively gazing into his empty glass. "It ain't likely

Cap'n Smart stayed wid no Chinks, but I goes over dere an' takes a peek, jest fer luck, sah. I shuah ain't got nothing agin' no Chink, but I reckon I makes de yaller boy tell what he knows." And as he finished the gin, he put the glass down carefully and strode forth.

He walked to the door of the laundry, and looked in where the men were now hard at work again ironing, their outfit temporarily repaired, and business going ahead as usual.

Bill looked at the place for a moment, and his trained eye saw marks of combat still upon the walls and shelves, which showed in spite of the new arrangements made.

"Seen a friend ob mine, a sailor man?" asked the mate, peering into the door.

"No see no ones — heap workee, velly busy," replied Wah Lee.

Bahama Bill entered and stuck forth his big, ugly head right close to the Chinaman's.

"You tell me where Cap'n Smart went after cleaning yo' place up, yo' heah?" he said menacingly.

The memory of the fracas was heavy upon Wah Lee. He backed away and drew his big, blue-barrelled gun.

"You getee 'way velly quick — see?" he said fiercely.

Bahama Bill reached over like lightning and grasped a Chinaman by the slack of his pigtail, jerking him in front of himself, and seizing him with his left hand, to keep him in place. An iron lay handy, and instantly

it was sailing straight for the head of the belligerent Lee.

It caught him full in the neck, propelled with the power of the giant mate's arm, and the Chinaman spun clear across the room, landing limp and insensible.

The big gun failed to explode, and went clattering upon the floor. Instantly Bill sprang for it, and seized its barrel just as a powerful heathen grabbed it by the stock. The mate wrenched it free with a quick jerk, and struck the fellow twice upon the top of his shaved head. Then the whole crowd piled upon him, swarmed up against him, grasping, clinging, gripping for his throat, while a hatchetman made a pass with his weapon, which reached the black man's skull.

Bahama Bill was tough and hard, his head was thick of bone, and, although the hatchet struck him hard enough to kill an ordinary man, the blade glanced off, and cut only a big gash in his scalp. The stars danced before his eyes, and he staggered for an instant, and in that instant the whole gang closed upon him. Then the realization of his predicament dawned upon him, and he let forth a mighty yell, tore loose from the strangling holds upon his neck, and then smashed right into the crowd with the fury of a wounded tiger, the blood from his head pouring over him.

There was a wild mixture of huge black arms, flying forms of pajamaed Chinamen going through the air, and with yell after yell he grabbed and smashed the first that came in his path, tearing up the whole place with the struggle.



He seized an ironing-board and swung it about his head, yelling hoarsely. Then he struck right and left with it, knocking Chinese, gear, and clothes indiscriminately about the room, until there was not the slightest movement to denote life anywhere but in his own mighty frame.

Upon the floor the forms lay about — smashed, stunned, insensible. Then his fury abating, he stopped for a moment to gaze through the haze of blood and dust of conflict. He grinned hideously at the sight, his wound making him grotesquely horrible. Then he was suddenly taken with an idea.

He grasped the cue of a Chink and drew it across the room to that of another, making them fast with a bend. Then he dragged the rest, the whole six, and fastened them to Wah Lee's cue. It made a pile of Chinese aggregating about a thousand pounds in dead weight; and he scanned the mass to contemplate. As he stopped, he was aware of a sound in the partition. He listened for a moment, and thought he heard his name called in a low voice — a voice which sounded far away and indistinct. He roared out a reply, and listened again. Yes, it was the voice of Captain Smart.

The captain was begging him to hurry and get him out of somewhere, and the mate roared out in reply:

"Where is yo'? Where is yo'? How I get thar?" And he ran along the partition, trying to discover a door or other opening. Nothing showed, and, losing patience, he caught up an iron and began smashing

the planks. In a few minutes he had broken through into a dark recess, into which he crawled without delay. Something smote him heavily upon the head, and he fell sprawling, lying helpless and half-insensible, while a shrill voice cried out in defiance.

Bahama Bill lay dazed and dizzy for a long time; probably ten minutes. Then he was aware of Smart's voice cursing furiously and calling for help. The huge mate slowly gathered himself, managed to rise to his knees, and, as he did so, the light which now shone through the gap in the partition showed him a slight girl standing over him with an axe. She had evidently struck him as he came through the bulkhead, and only her youth and frailness had prevented the blow from finishing him. He now saw she was about to repeat the operation, and he quickly snatched the weapon from her, and drew her to him.

"What fo' yo' hit me?" he asked, angrily.

"You velly bad mans — go away!" screamed the child.

Bill searched the surrounding gloom with a quick, comprehensive glance, and noticed a form lying in a bunk covered with a cloth. He made his way to it, and uncovered the prostrate form of Smart, securely bound, but not securely gagged. The sailor could only use his tongue, but he did use that member to its fullest extent, while he told quickly of the way he had run up against Wah Lee. Then the sight of Bahama Bill's head caught his gaze, and he made a wry face.

The giant mate was like a black fury with his marks of combat upon him.

"This child is a wife of that rascal," said Smart, explaining the little girl's presence in such a place. "She's about twelve years old, and his property — his slave, I suppose you would call it. He keeps her in here, where no one can ever see her, and she thought you were some fellow going to harm her when she struck you with the axe. I tried to tell you as you came through, but couldn't make you hear — that's better, now cut loose my feet." And the mate passed his knife through the cords, setting him free.

"I sho' feel some ashamed toe think yo' dun up by dese Chinks," said Bill, as Smart rose from the filthy bunk. "Yo' ain't much hurt?"

"Not hurt at all — not like you," said Smart impatiently.

"Dat clip was jest accident — shuah, shuah. Dey ain't hurt me none toe speak of — only a little blood. But dat kid gal cum near killin' me wid dat axe. I ain't quite through yet. Come along into the room where dey lays."

They took the child with them, and crawled through the bulkhead. One of the wounded men upon the floor had recovered his senses, and was busily at work trying to loosen his cue as Bahama Bill stepped up. A jolt with his foot stopped operations for the time, and Smart stood contemplating the victory.

"What'll we do about it?" asked the yachtsman.

"Do? I jest reckon we'll take de whole bunch

abo'd de ship. We'll need some extra hands toe make de passage quick. We got toe git a move on, fo' we got toe git dat stuff up toe catch de steamer at Jacksonville. Dere's a cyart right in dat co'ner, sah. Help me pile 'em in."

Smart, still furious from the treatment he had received, lent a willing hand, and in a few minutes they had the whole bunch of Celestials dumped in the cart and made secure.

"What'll we do wif dat little gal?" asked Bill, eying the child. "She ain't all Chink, by de looks; reckon she's a half-breed."

"We'll have to take her with us," said Smart, and so they started out of the shop, pushing the cart with the Chinese before them; and they attracted no attention for some minutes, for the affrays had been little noticed, as there had been no gun-fire.

"Hold on, let's get the clothes," said Smart, running back into the doorway and grabbing what bundles he could reach handily, and which had still been left intact from the whirlwind passage of the giant mate. He tossed them into the cart, and they went rapidly down to the dock.

Some small boys and one or two loafers followed, wishing to see the fun, but no one molested them or inquired their purpose. They reached the water-side without mishap. Fighting Jule was sitting there waiting for her lord to show up, and she was in anything but a sweet humour. The sight of the little Chinese

girl made her alter her purpose to assault her huge partner, and she inquired briskly into details.

"Yo' take de kid an' keep her till we git de crew abo'd," said Bill, with the first approach at gentleness in his voice.

Jule took the child. She was motherly, matronly, and affectionate, though a fighter. Her own progeny were safe at Key West, and this little yellow girl, this Chinese, appealed to her curiosity and motherhood alike. She gathered her in her arms and looked her over in wonder, while the men lowered their victims into the small boat.

"Huccum yo' toe be wif dem Chinks — is yo' de little pickaninny ob dat Wah Lee man?" she asked.

"Me Wah Lee's wife," said the child, crying.

"Yo' stop tellin' me lies, lil' gal; yo' ain't nothin' but a baby."

"Me Wah Lee's wife. He bought me last moon. Velly bad mans takee Wah Lee away; velly bad mans takee me." The child spoke remarkably well for a Chinese.

A crowd of loafers had now been attracted by the unusual proceedings, and, in spite of the apathy of the Florida cracker, they managed to excite some wonder as to what the men of the *Sea-Horse* were about. In less time than it takes to tell it, Bahama Bill and Smart had the Mongolians aboard, where Sam and Heldron were instructed to look after them, and see that they went to work as soon as they were recovered sufficiently to do duty.

"Ef yo' boys don't want toe work dis trip, yo' kin make de Chinks work fo' yo'. Dey owes us a bit ob work. Break out dat hook an' git dat jib on her."

In less than five minutes the *Sea-Horse* was standing down the channel out to sea, Sam and Heldron lost in amazement at the turn of affairs. Some of the loafers on the dock shouted out something, but they made no reply, and in a few minutes were beyond hailing.

"De boat leaves fo' home at six — I reckon you'll hab toe cum wif me," said Jule, leading the little girl away and gazing angrily after the *Sea-Horse*. "Ef I wasn't a lady I'd shuah knock dat coon in de haid," she added. "I dun paid er dollar an' a half fo' toe git heah, an' now I got toe go home — cum."

"I reckon I'll change mah clothes en clean up er bit," said the mate, after they rounded the point and stood away northward.

"So will I," said Smart. "Better open up the clothes I brought and get some clean ones."

Several of the shanghaied men were now able to get about, and Sam took them in charge. Wah Lee gazed about him dizzily, but made no comment. Heldron had passed his knife through his cue, cutting it off close to his head, in order to loose him from the bunch. He looked angrily at the sailor, and felt his strange-looking pate with a rueful hand.

"You heap sabbee work," said Sam. "Git busy,

you dam' Chink." And he helped the truculent Tong leader to his feet with the toe of his sea-boot.

The fight was pretty well worked out of Wah Lee, for he obeyed as best he could, glancing with narrowing, wicked eyes at the sailor. Lines were coiled up at the direction of the two men, and in less than half an hour Sam and Heldron were lying at ease, hurling directions at the bunch of Celestials, who endeavoured to obey orders.

Bahama Bill washed his wounded head, which ached sorely. Then he sought clean clothes from the bundles brought from the laundry. By some chance Smart had gotten hold of nothing save female apparel, but one bundle happened to contain several pairs of pajamas; and, as the weather was quite warm, he donned a suit and came on deck. Bahama Bill had no recourse but to do likewise. He jammed his huge limbs into a pair of the loose trousers, which came to his knees. This appeared not so bad, for he was used to going barefooted. The loose coat covered him, the sleeves reaching to his elbows; and thus attired he, also, came on deck to take a look around.

The recalcitrant Wah Lee looked lugubriously at the black mate.

"Where you takee me?" he asked. "Where you go?"

"Toe China, toe de land ob Chinks," said Bahama Bill lugubriously, scowling at his former adversary. "Git out de shears, Sam; an' yo', Heldron, git out de line toe make de Chinks fast."

"What for you do?" asked Wah Lee.

"Me showee you, me showee you," snarled Bahama Bill. "Is yo' good barber, cap'n?"

"I reckon I can cut the hair fairly well," assented Smart.

"De razzer ob mine is in de locker, toe de right," suggested Bill.

Wah Lee was quickly tied fast and his hair cut close. Then a lather was made, and before many minutes his head was shaved as clean as a fairly good razor could shave it.

"Next!" called Bahama Bill, in the tone of a barber.

All went through the same operation, two of the pigtails being kept as souvenirs of the occasion. The débris was thrown overboard.

"Now yo' Chinks git out de soap an' de water — show 'em where dey is kept, Heldron — an' I wants toe see dishear ship washed fo' an' aft — see? Heap sabbee? I wants toe see dishear ship come inter Jacksonville lookin' like a yacht; lookin' like she was something toe be proud ob. Git toe work."

The wind held fair, and for two days the *Sea-Horse* ran up the coast, making six or seven knots, raising the jetty off the bar the third day out. The sloop had been scrubbed alow and aloft, her decks rubbed white, her spare sails even scrubbed clean, and she looked good to a nautical eye as she rounded the sea-buoy and stood up the St. John's River for town.

The inhabitants of Mayport and Pilotown were



treated to the novel sight of a heavily built sloop manned by a crew large enough for a four-master, the officers uniformed in bright-coloured pajamas, which fitted not at all, and the larger part of the hands distinctly Mongolian. The customs officer stopped her and boarded her without delay.

"Where do you come from — China?" asked the official, in amazement.

"Yo' surely ain't forgot de ole *Sea-Horse*, Marse Hennerly," said Bahama Bill, coming on deck and recognizing an old acquaintance in the boarding officer. "We got a consignment ob ca'tridges — American ammunition — here's de papers, an' de crew we shipped in a hurry, without gittin' time toe sign 'em on in regular shape; but dey is all right; dey belongs right in dishear State."

As it is not necessary to sign on hands in small vessels coasting unless there is especial reason for it, the officer left without further remark, and the *Sea-Horse* proceeded on her way.

The steamer for New York was at the dock, and would not sail until after dark. There was plenty of time to make the consignment and get the bill of sale through. The unruly crew were kept at work hoisting out cases of ammunition until all was aboard the steamer. Then the ship was washed down and gear put in place, and the *Sea-Horse* looked almost like a pleasure craft.

"I will give you a thousand dollars for her," said

a shipper who had been attracted by the strange uniforms and crew.

"Make it fifteen hundred," said Bahama Bill.

"She will never be in better condition to sell," cautioned Smart, who felt as though losing an old friend.

They finally compromised on twelve hundred, and, as Captain Sanders showed up before dark, dead broke and very thirsty, he was more than willing to get cash for his share. The deal was made, the money paid, and the Celestial crew were at last allowed to go ashore.

Wah Lee made for the depot with his followers. He had no thought for seeking redress by the aid of the authorities, for, with the Tong men, the foreign pigs are always dealt with personally. There were plenty of Chinese who ran laundries in Jacksonville who could be levied upon to produce the railroad fare to get him and his gang back to their place of business.

With new clothes and rigged out splendidly, all hands left the dock long before darkness set in. Smart had a receipt for his share of the salvaged ammunition, and the feeling that he had several thousand dollars was not distasteful to him. His cruise on the wrecking-sloop had been successful, and it was with a somewhat mixed feeling he said good-bye to the big black mate.

"Good-bye, cap," said Bahama Bill. "I shuah like yo', an' yo' shuah done well wif me — good-bye. Mebbe we kin make a new deal some day. Dere's

plenty ob money wracking, ef yo' know how toe wrack right. Mebbe Sanders an' us kin go inter de business right, and git a bigger ship. Let me heah from yo'."

"I certainly will," said Smart. "Good-bye." And the giant fingers of the mate of the *Sea-Horse* closed upon his own with their firm, solid grip.

Late that night a sheriff came rapidly down the dock to where the steamer was just pulling out.

"Seen anything of the sloop *Sea-Horse*?" he asked several bystanders.

"Thar she lays — right at the dock," said the watchman of the wharf.

"Ah!" He smiled grimly.

"You want the crew?" asked the watchman.

"I certainly do that," said the sheriff. "There's a bit of a charge of kidnapping against the mate and captain. Ran off with a whole lot of Chinks from below. They are aboard, I suppose?"

"That sloop was sold out hours ago, the crew gone, and the whole thing settled before five o'clock. It ain't likely you'll come up with the men you're after in this town. No, sir, they don't belong here — good night." And the watchman grinned as the sheriff, after gazing down at the deserted vessel, sadly went his way.

At the station Bahama Bill looked up to the window where Smart sat in the train. He felt the parting with the keenness often developed in the African character, and he was loath to leave until the train pulled out.

"Good-bye ag'in, cap; good-bye," he called up to him as the train gathered headway slowly.

Sanders stood near, and, not knowing the friendship between the two, was a little disconcerted at the mate's warmth.

"Come on, we take the train going the other way, Bill," he said, as the mate waved his hand.

"Shuah, shuah. Good-bye, cap — He was all right, Sanders; dat yacht feller was all toe de good. I ain't got but one t'ing agin' him."

"What's that?" asked Captain Sanders.

"Well — er — er, well, I cayn't hab de highest re-gyard fo' his — well, sah, I don't know jest how toe say it, but he sho' never ought toe been dun up by dem Chinks — dat's all."

He put his hand into his pocket and drew forth two handsomely braided queues.

"Yo' see dese heah? Well, I'se gwine toe make a nice dog-whip ob dem fo' mah little boy Will toe play wif." And he stroked their satin length approvingly as he boarded the cars for home.

## XIV

### The Edge of the Roncador

"THE Canal needs men to dig," said Booker, the head of the firm of shippers at Kingston, "it's up to us to get 'em and it's up to you to take 'em to Colon —"

"But I'm not running a slaver, I'm a merchant-man, by George, an' you can go to —"

"Hold on, Captain James," broke in the man of affairs, "if you can't run the *Enos*, a little five hundred ton steamer the way she should be run, it'll be about time for me to look for another skipper."

"But, Mr. Booker, she's as rotten as punk — there ain't a plate in her thicker'n a sheet of blotting paper, an' blame little stronger. She really ain't fit to run passengers even if you bribe the inspectors to let us. I ain't kickin' about the way you've treated me, it ain't that at all, but to ram that ship full o' niggers and send her out is mighty nigh murder, an' that's a fact."

Captain James was a shifty, fat and altogether sodden specimen of the tropical white islander. He had lost a fine vessel, and being unable to get another had drifted about the West Indies handling whatever he

could command. Booker, Benson & Co. had found use for him in one of their old ships which had seen her best days running bananas to New Orleans. She had made money, paid for herself ten times over, and now she was just able to stagger along with leaky boilers and scaled plates to the tune of seven knots, heading, as James always thought, for the port of missing ships. Each voyage seemed to be her last, but she somehow drifted in to her port of destination with pumps working and crew mutinous, to discharge and stagger home again. James could not afford to give her up. To do so would have meant ruin for him, and as long as her owners paid him his seventy-five dollars per month — enough to pay for his rum and clothes — he stuck to her with the sullenness of a hungry bulldog gripping a dry bone. How he hated her. He cursed her daily, he swore at her free and fluently whenever she dipped her dull gray sides into the beautiful blue water of the Caribbean at each roll, and when he brought her to her dock, which he did with much care and concern, his exclamations at her perverseness to minding the helm were marvels of linguistic art. His mate, a tall, thin, saturnine Scotchman with bleary eyes from rum and cola, would sometimes deign to look at him with a languid interest during these moments of loud speech, and once — only once — he had allowed himself to be so absorbed in contemplating his master, that he forgot to cast the bow-line from the drum of the donkey engine which was winding it in, and by so doing pulled and tore

out an iron cleat upon the dock end. Then pandemonium had reigned and the silent mate soon retired to the privacy of his room to still his quaking conscience and steady his shaking nerves with potations of his favourite beverage, rum and cola.

"You will proceed to Boddertown, and then to Georgetown in the Great Cayman, and after seeing Jones there, who will see to clearing you all right, you will run the crowd to Colon, do you understand," said Mr. Booker to his ship-master.

"How many will there be?" asked James sullenly, after finding that his argument was of no avail.

"As many as she will carry — how many do you say, five hundred?"

"Good Lord, Mr. Booker — what? Five hundred niggers in that bit of a ship? Man, think a little."

"She has her ventilators — has both holds well-ventilated, a fruiter is as comfortable below as on deck, has as much ventilation with her blowers as a liner —"

"Make it three hundred at the limit," said James with more decision than his employer had ever given him credit for.

"Er — er, well, let it go at that, then. You'll attend to stowing 'em, give 'em plenty of grub — it's only a couple of days with good weather, and they can stand on deck for that time."

"All right, then," said the sailor with a sigh. He was not a bad man, only weakened by misfortune. Had he lived a little differently, had better luck and

governed his thirst, he would have compared favourably with many of the best skippers in the West India trade. He arose, clapped on his grass hat and mopped his red face, squared his fat shoulders under his dirty white linen coat, and strode forth into the glaring sunshine. He went down the street, stopped at a saloon, took several drinks, and after that went aboard, rousing the chief engineer and ordering steam for five o'clock that afternoon.

"We will get to sea before dark," said he to the mate Mr. McDuff. "Don't get too drunk, we've got a big job — I'll tell you later."

A week later the *Enos* was steaming over the calm and beautiful Caribbean. The sky was a tropical blue dotted with the lumpy trade clouds, and the sea was that beautiful tint only seen during perfect weather. She was running along smoothly down past the Quitasueña Bank, between it and the Serrano Cays, and so far all had gone well. Jones had proved an agent worthy of Mr. Booker's best expectations. He had managed to get together three hundred and ten strapping fellows who were destined to dig for the good of maritime commerce, and he had held out inducements which, while models of veracity, were also works of art. He had made even the most sordid details of life upon the Isthmus appear in the garb of most attractive romance, and money — why, money was the thing the Canal cared less for than anything in the world. Three hundred and ten men were destined to be rich in this world's goods. He had con-



vinced even the most skeptical of this, and the only thing that kept the rest of the population upon the Cayman was the size of the *Enos*. He wished to ship five hundred, but James was sturdy enough to stop him. Under the influence of six copious drinks of rum and cola, he had managed to put up a determined opposition. He finally threatened to go ashore and get very drunk if another man was sent him, and Jones knowing him to be quite capable of keeping his word in this respect, desisted at three hundred and ten.

"You fat sea-scutt, I'd fry the grease out o' you if I could get another man to take the ship," said Jones in a fury. "I get a dollar a head for those niggers, an' you've done me to the tune of two hundred — but you can bet I won't forget you, you lobster, you blamed fat lobster —"

Captain James contented himself with calling the agent every name he could remember that carried disgrace or disrespect along with it, and after that stood upon the bridge storming and fuming, every now and then bursting forth when some new and especially choice adjective happened to reach his memory.

By the time the *Enos* reached the vicinity of Quitasueña Bank, the skipper had cooled both mentally and physically, the evaporation of the rum with which he supplied himself producing a revivifying effect only to be appreciated by one who is addicted to rum and cola. His wrath had subsided until he scarcely mumbled his disdain for the energetic Jones, and his face,

always red and swollen from both the fierce sunshine and his diet, now took on a more natural hue.

"Let her go well to the westward of the Roncador," said he to McDuff as the mate came on the bridge that evening. "The current is very strong, and I ain't quite certain of the rate of our chronometer. Got a jolt last voyage and seems to be going wrong ever since. Get your lights burning brightly to-night — there'll be some ships passing and there's no use saving five cents' worth of oil for that buzzard, Booker — and tell the chief to hustle her along, toss in the coals, and if the second is drunk, turn the hose on him, for we'll have to drive her through. The niggers will have to go below at eight bells; can't have 'em lying about the deck all night getting in the way. It's cool enough with the blowers on — keep 'em turned to the wind, that's your business. South five east by Standard, and that'll be about south two by the binnacle — keep your eye peeled. That's all."

Captain James retired to his room while the *Enos* rolled slowly down the Caribbean, dipping her gray sides alternately into the smooth sea which rolled lazily. The gathering darkness still showed the forms of many big coloured men lying upon the now silent deck, but when eight bells struck off they were told to go below, and after that the deck was deserted save by the men of the watch.

Below in the 'tween-decks, where the banana racks had been removed, the islanders were grouped in hot and uncomfortable groups. The blowers made ven-

tilation sufficient, but the air was warm and the odour from three hundred hot bodies made it far from pleasant. The bo'sn who had herded the crowd below stood near the hatchway in conversation with a huge islander.

"Yes, I know it's yo' orders, but I don't see why the captain makes us stay below. I am a sailor man, sare, and I will not be in the way if yo' let me go on deck for the night," said the negro.

"I ain't got nothin' to do with it," answered the bo'sn, "my orders is you stay here below — an' here you stays."

"But if I give you my word as a sailor man to help on deck, don' yo' think yo' can allow me?" persisted the giant good-naturedly. "Look at me, sare, I very warm." And he showed his bare chest running water.

"Aw, you niggers ain't satisfied wid anything," said the bo'sn impatiently. "You'll get to a hotter place 'n this before you leave Panama. Get your crowd to sleep, fer I'm goin' to fasten the hatch — there's water a-plenty in them barrels, you kin drink all you want, an' if you get short holler for the second to start the donkey an' pump some more in."

"Very well, I reckon I must do as yo' say," and the giant negro settled himself among his followers, who gradually made the best of circumstances and went to sleep.

Midnight found the *Enos* ploughing along over the smooth swell, a bright moon shining upon the sea

and making it almost as light as day. McDuff on the bridge walked to and fro trying to keep awake, while the hiss and tinkle of the side-wash was the only sound that broke the stillness. The slight vibrations from the worn-out engines barely reached the forward part of the ship, and only the low noise of the foam told of the ship's headway. She might almost have been at anchor, rolling slowly from side to side as she took the long easy swell upon her beam. The chief mate was warm and dry. He had been without liquid refreshment for nearly four hours, and he saw a long vista ahead of him into which the nose of the old ship pointed. He speculated a few moments. He might go below for a drink, for there was nothing in sight, and although it was against even the orders of James to drink while on duty, there was no reason to suppose any one would be the wiser should he do so. He went down the steps from the bridge and entered his room, pouring forth from a bottle a good, nifty drink, and fizzing it well up with the sparkling cola — ah, was there ever such refreshment anywhere else in the world — what was that? Hark, — a jolt ran through the ship, a slight jar, causing her to tremble. It seemed to McDuff as if the engines stopped for a few moments — but no, they were going again, for he could feel the vibration. He hurried on deck.

When he reached the bridge he looked about the horizon, and for a few minutes saw nothing save the dim line where the night met the sea. Then he gradually took in an outline close aboard to port. It was

white, and while he gazed he heard the low snore of the surf of the Roncador. Almost instantly the chief engineer called up from below through the tube.

"What's wrong?" he asked. "Seemed to hit something an' knock the engine out a bit, but she's goin' all right now — if there's anything wrong let's have it."

"Nothin' the matter I know of — port, hard a port," he whispered to the man at the wheel — "nothing wrong here," he went on to the chief, speaking through the tube. "If the engine is all right let her go, ram the coal into her and wake her up." Then to the man at the wheel — "Steady, steady as she goes — how does she head now?"

"Sout' b' west, half west, sur," said the sleepy helmsman.

Five minutes later the chief called up the tube.

"Water comin' in by the jump — must have hit something — started both pumps, but she'll be over the fire-room floor in ten minutes — for God's sake tell me what has happened."

McDuff stood petrified, irresolute. Then he drew a deep breath and looked out over the sea and the ship. All was quiet, there was no sign of panic or trouble below. Gazing aft he saw the two small boats in their chocks with their canvas covers, and while he looked he knew it would be but a few moments before the struggle to take possession of them would begin. Three hundred and thirty men, or all hands, including the extra mess-men, would have to take to

the boats, which would hold at the most but forty of them. Nearly three hundred were doomed. Before dawn they would be in the sea unless he ran the *Enos* upon the bank. But he could not do this without calling the captain. It was his ship, or rather his command, and he knew his duty. He went quickly to the master's room.

"What, hit the Roncador? How the —" but James was enough of a seaman to spring on deck without wasting words. He was a bit groggy, but the sight of the quiet ship steadied him. There was nothing to fear just yet. He rang off the engines and the dull boom of the gong sounded strangely loud through the quiet night, reverberating through the hull and making those awake curious.

"For God's sake don't waste any time. Call the chief and second from below — let 'em keep the pumps going, but we must get those small boats over and away before the niggers get wind of what is happening. Lord, if they knew we'd be goners — quick, get the watch quietly and lower away."

"But ain't we going to run her ashore, sir?" asked McDuff.

"Lord, yes, we'll start her fair for the surf, but we must get away if we want to live. She won't hold together half an hour, an' we'll be a good mile from solid land — man, man, hurry for your life — those niggers will take charge of everything — hurry —"

McDuff needed little urging. He called the watch quietly while the captain spoke down the tube to the

chief, telling him to get his crowd up as quickly as he could. In less than two minutes men were working like mad in the moonlight. Straps were cut and lashings cut, while the low fierce oaths and half-whispered threats of the frantic men told of their furious haste. The selfish brute was in supreme control, and it showed in each strained face and trembling hand. The fire-crew came tumbling from below, cursing each other as they came out of the hatches, some vowing to take the lives of those who obstructed their path, all panting, gasping, rushing about with the wild panic of men who are suddenly forced to face their end. James swore fiercely at them and struck right and left with a belaying-pin, threatening, begging them not to alarm the cargo. It was their only chance.

The boats dropped noiselessly over the side, the men sliding down the tackles, clambering down along the lines, all getting into them as quickly as possible. The half-naked fire-crew with their bare bodies shoved and pushed for places, and if there had been even a little sea on they would have swamped the small craft.

James had run to the bridge intending to point the vessel for the edge of the reef. He ran the wheel over, but at that moment the second engineer, who had been told to start the ship ahead, not understanding, or caring for the cargo, shut off steam and climbed over the side into the boat below him. There was nothing for the captain to do but go or be left behind, and he hesitated not an instant, but followed the sec-

and over the side just as the men were pushing off. They rowed rapidly away from the horrible vicinity, heading due west. Few cared even to look back at what they felt must become a scene of slaughter, and only now and then did some conscience-smitten seaman fix his eyes upon the hull which now rolled silently upon the sea.

By daylight the boat in charge of McDuff sighted the liner bound for Colon, and in a few moments their hail was answered. Signals were made and within an hour the entire outfit was aboard the big ship and heading for their port of destination.

It was a terrible tale the men told, a tale of a foundering ship which had sprung a leak — how the crowd of negroes had fought for the boats and how the crew, after desperate efforts, had driven them back. There were many little deficiencies in the tales which their kind-hearted rescuers essayed to fill, allowing that the stress and excitement had made the imaginations of many quite acute. James landed the second day afterwards and reported his vessel lost in mid-ocean, having suddenly sprung a leak which all efforts failed to stop. She was somewhere in the vicinity of the Roncador Bank.

Two days later, while he was standing upon the dock at Colon waiting for passage on the steamer to Kingston, he noticed a strange-looking ship coming into the harbour. She was lying on one side until her deck was awash and she was slowly steaming at the rate of about four knots an hour. Deep she was in



the water, so deep that her plimsoll mark was several feet under, but she was working slowly in. Upon her decks were a crowd of negroes. As the ship drew near he noticed a huge black fellow upon the bridge who walked athwart-ships with a determined stride. The ship was the *Enos*, there was no mistake about it, his ship afloat and coming to dock, and the man who walked the bridge and commanded her was the giant islander, the foreman of the working gang.

"Yes, Ah'm a sailor man," said the good-natured giant an hour later, after the tugs had gotten to work pumping the flooded bilge. "Ah'm a sailor man, an' I brought the Captain James his vessel. I sho'd like to know if he is still alive, fo' I've reason to think he must hab been lost in de small boats — has yo' heard anything about him? Yo' kin tell him Bahama Bill would like to see him!"

"Yes, he's here all right," announced the inspector.

"Well, I'd like to have a minute's talk with him, just a moment's little talk," said the man gently in his musical voice.

"I'll send for him at once," said the official, "but how did you save the ship? He said she foundered."

"Ah, yes, it was a small matter, a matter of a mattress and some lines—we drew it over the side and under the bilge whar she hit the edge of de Roncador—oh, yes, it soon stopped and wid the pumps we kep' her goin', hundreds of us, sare, passin' the water over the side in barrels and buckets, — yo'

think I kin see de captain soon, — Ah'm very anxious toe speak with him; I sho' is — yo' reckon I kin?"

Before the ship was properly docked the steamer for Kingston had pulled out, and upon her decks a crowd of men gazed at the strange vessel which had just come in. Captain James and McDuff stood side by side at the rail, and as the ship passed they noticed the giant black man coming forth from the pilot-house of the *Enos*. He gazed at them long and intently.

"Come, it's all over with us," said McDuff sullenly, "let's go get a drink."

The islander stood long in the sunshine, shading his eyes with his hand, until the steamer was a mere speck out at sea.

"I sho'd like to hab spoken to Captain James," he said to an agent who had come to see him about the men to work on the Canal. "Yes, I sho' feel that he missed somethin' — My name is Bahama Bill."

"Well, well, never mind him now. Let's get down to business. Let's see what we can do with this gang. He'll be back after he has seen his owners and straightened out this affair. He says you acted pretty rough about trying to take his boats and he had to drive you off. He'll be back all right an' you can talk with him —"

"No, he will never come back. No sah. I shall miss dat little talk with him, but — well, as you say, I'll check off the cargo of men, they're all good fellows every one. Come —"

"They're a good gang," said the agent to the engi-

neer of the local work that afternoon; "they're as good a set of men as we'll get. Lazy? Of course they're lazy, did you ever see a black man who wasn't lazy? Fight? No, they're not much on a fight, but I believe there is one fellow, the foreman, a Fortune Islander, who is set upon killing — he has a way of asking after a fellow, the captain of the ship that brought 'em here, that makes me a bit nervous, he's so blamed gentle and insistent about seein' him — but he never will, so what's the difference. I'll turn 'em to in the morning."

## XV

### The Wrecker

ON the edge of the Great Bahama, near the turn of the Caicos bank, the hull of the *Stella Polare* lay high on the coral reef. She was a passenger steamer, and had made the run many times between Havana and the Mediterranean ports. She had run with an easy company, and many passengers had changed their countries in her; for she had been a crack packet in her day; and her day had passed, joining the vast host in limitless time.

From a distance the black hull loomed large and sinister, a long iron mass standing out clearly in the surrounding whiteness of coral and foam. Closer observation showed the rusty plates, the paintless cabin houses, and the weather-worn woodwork that still remained. Her two rakish funnels stood slantwise, holding their places by the aid of rusty guys, the chains and all valuable metal work having long ago been stripped from her. And so she lay as the *Buccaneer*, a wrecking schooner from Nassau, came slowly across the bank.

The rays of the setting sun shone strongly upon the iron hull, and the crew of the schooner gazed at her

from various positions of ease and lassitude; for the day had been hot and sultry and the air filled with a brassy coloured humidity that was as thick as a heavy haze on the horizon. The master of the wrecker was an American named Sanders, formerly master of the *Sea-Horse*, and his mate was William Haskins, known as "Bahama Bill." He was a good-looking fellow, bronzed and fine featured, and his black hair was streaked with gray. Heavy lines in his face suggested suffering rather than exposure, although his vocation was rigorous enough.

The master had gazed for fully a quarter of an hour at the wreck as the vessel fanned along before the light breeze, when his mate addressed him.

"Shall we get the gear ready, cap? I got a box ob Atlas powder and twenty fathom of fuse with exploders. Dat's enough, hey?"

"Yes, get what you need in the small boat," said the master absently. "You can haul down the jib and let go when you're ready. Give her not more than four fathoms; for we won't stay here long — looks like it's coming on bad, and the glass is falling. The bank isn't safe this time of year. We ought to get into some pocket and tie up." The master spoke absently, still gazing at the wreck, and the mate noted it.

"She shuah don' look much like what she do when yo' had her, Cap," said Bahama Bill.

"What, the *Stella Polare*?"

"Yes, sare, an' it warn't so long ago neither. A

few years on de reef make a lot o' difference in her. Seems like yesterday you run her into Havana fer de last voyage in de old charter. It shuah do, Cap."

"When you're ready with the small boat I'll go with you," said the Captain, still gazing at the black hull.

Anchoring with the fore and mainsails still up, the small boat went slowly into the bay. There was little or no surf on the lee of the bank, and the party landed without difficulty. Then they began carrying their outfit to the wreck. They would break her up, stripping the plates from her sides for old iron and tearing apart the most valuable portion of her engines to sell at Key West. It was a job that the men who had been there before them had declined as unprofitable, for it required considerable work to strip the plates, and the engines were well rusted in the half-submerged hull. At high water there was little of value uncovered in her hold; but the wrecking crew had not been successful that season, and it was a case of getting what they could. Wrecks had been few, and the sponging industry, which all wreckers of the bank usually follow during the summer and hurricane season, had paid small returns. Dynamite was expensive to use; but it was just as well to explode a part of it as to have it spoil on their hands. They could still keep enough for a few loads of fish, for the law of the reef and bank was never enforced in regard to high explosives, and they were far away from any prying eyes.

The crew carried sledges and hydraulic jacks, with a spare tackle or two, and the mate carried the explosive. They reached the high side where the dry sand had banked against it, and one by one mounted to the deck, the Captain going aft, still gazing at the old hulk in an absent manner. She was a long ship, and he walked the entire length of her deck until he reached the taffrail. Then he turned and looked at the cabin house. His mind was far away from the work he intended. He saw that deck as it had been in the days gone by, the days of his youth, and as he looked a strange feeling of loneliness came upon him.

The deck was there before him, and upon it he saw the faces of the people who had walked or sat upon it. Even a blistered bit of paint on the deck-house recalled a certain day in the time gone when he sat there with the one woman he had lived for, the wife of his youth. A soft voice called to him and spoke the words he remembered so well. He almost started, and a choking feeling came in his throat. Yes, he had sat near that particular spot many times and listened to that voice; now still, but which seemed to call again. There were the stitches in the canvas deck covering she used to rub with her foot while talking, sitting there as they used to do in the old days when the company allowed him to take his wife with him on the run across. The deck seemed to slant away and roll from side to side, and he balanced himself to meet the roll of the ship. The stillness about him

was unbroken save by the distant murmur of the sea and the low voices of the men waiting forward for the work to begin; but he heard nothing save the voice of the past.

He went into the deck-house. There was the old settee, now without the red upholstered cushions. He remembered how many times he had sat there in the evenings after the voyage was run, and how for years they had chatted under the light of the saloon lamp when the passengers had all gone ashore and the ship was deserted by all save the crew. About him were the signs of wreck and ruin, and he stood for some minutes gazing about the cabin. A woman's shoe lay mouldy and green upon the floor near a state-room door, and it brought a dull pain in his heart as he noted it. The owner was dead, long dead, probably lost in the hurricane when the vessel went into her last resting-place. Far away in Nassau was a mound, grass grown and storm swept, the resting-place of the one who had made life worth living for him. Soon the sand would bank up and cover the old hull, and the long beach grass would grow over it, blotting out all.

He looked into a deserted room. The door was broken and hung slantwise upon its one rusty hinge. Then he stepped softly back into the middle of the saloon and listened. A thousand little things brought back memories, and he raised his head. "Oh, God! the loneliness of it all!" he cried.

In the stillness he thought he heard the laughter of



a woman's voice. No, it was the sobbing, and he started. A land crab scuttled across the floor of the cabin, making a disagreeable rattling as it went. In the ghastly stillness of the lost ship a thousand sounds seemed to fall upon his listening ears. He saw the table set and the people sitting about it, the stewards getting the dinner, and the old questions asked him of the day's run; but foremost and always was the form of one woman whose bright smile welcomed him from the table end. He stole forward and went into his room, the Captain's room of the liner. The wreck and confusion here were even greater than aft; but he saw nothing now save the time when they used to sit there, she sewing upon some piece of woman's work and he poring over the chart which held his course.

His heart seemed bursting. The ghastly wreck was awful, — it was the wreck of his hopes, — and he bowed his head and covered his face with his hands as he sat upon the edge of the bunk. The light was fading; but he failed to note it. Fifteen, twenty, thirty minutes he sat there, and the mate, who had returned with the rest of the gear left in the boat, was searching for him. The sun sank below the sea before that officer broke into the room and saw him sitting there.

"It's dun gitting too late toe do enny mo' this evenin', Cap," said he with a tone of complaint.

"All right. Go aboard, I'll stay here awhile," said Sanders.

There was something in the seaman's face that caused the big mate to forget his temper at the delay.

"De men want dere grub, sare," he said quietly, "but I reckon I ken wait. Shall I send de boat in fo' yo', sare?"

"Good Lord! let me alone!" he cried. "Go! Leave a boat for me. I'll row out aboard myself when I'm ready."

The mate went forward, and the men followed him in the small boat. They went aboard the schooner for the evening meal, and afterward turned in for the night. A small boat was towed in by a man in the craft they had used, and it was left upon the sand.

Comment was made forward at the Captain's absence. No one understood. Even the mate, who had an idea, did not think it of enough real importance to dwell upon it; and so the tropic night fell over the reef, the haze deepened, and the darkness grew intense.

In the dull, heated quiet of the early night the Captain sat upon the ship's rail. He could not stand the oppressive stillness of the blackness in the cabin. The outline of the surf upon the sea side of the wreck shone in a line of phosphorus, but the dull glare failed to outline the vast bulk of the hull. The wind had all died away and the warmth of the air was felt, being heavy with a moisture and sultriness that bespoke of a falling glass. But he sat and wandered through the memories of a past life which was all the

more bitter because of the happiness that would never return.

"She will never come back — never!" he whispered into the void about him. "I'm so tired — tired of it all!" and he groaned aloud in his anguish. He would not break up the ship. In the morning he would find some excuse to tell the mate and crew. He could not tell them the real one. They would not understand. How could they — poor devils? What had they known of life, life as he had known it? No, he would weigh his anchor and sail away over the tropic seas to live out his existence as Fate had demanded of him. He might kill himself; but there were others dependent upon him for a living, and he would not do a cowardly thing, would not cause them suffering to alleviate his own. He must live on — just on and on to help the few who trusted in his strength to provide for them. It was no pleasure save to ease their burden. It would be to-morrow — and to-morrow — and to-morrow — a broken life of unending work and hardship.

"God grant I'll not have to make it too long! Let me go to a long — a long, an unending rest! I want to sleep, to sleep for ever; for I'm tired out!"

His voice was deep and vibrant; but it fell upon the empty air, and he more than ever noted the silence. He gazed to the southward. There was nothing upon the dark sea. To the eastward it seemed a little blacker; but over the desolate ocean there came no sound of even a breaking wave top. For several hours

he sat there gazing out into the blackness, and then sometimes watching the riding light of his vessel as it flickered upon the oily sea. All was quiet upon the schooner. The tired men were sleeping, for they expected heavy work on the morrow.

A low murmur came from the sea. It seemed to come from some distant point, and rose and fell faintly. Then a flash of lightning lit the inky darkness to the southeast. He waited to hear the following thunder; but none came. Minutes afterward the murmur rose again.

In the sultry air even his breathing oppressed him, and he turned to fix his limbs in a more comfortable posture. He sat easily now and waited. Over the sea from the southeast came a low rushing sound, the sound of a mighty wind, and as he gazed toward it he felt the first puff in his face. The noise of the surf on the outside of the bank grew louder. A spurt of sand whistled up against the steel side beneath him. Then came a fiercer blast, and the storm burst over the reef with a wild, swirling roar of wind and rain.

He stood up and faced it. It relieved his feelings, this fury of the elements, and he seemed to be again upon his ship at sea facing the hurricane of the West Indies. The dry sand of the upper bank struck the sides of the wreck with great force, and flying over it cut his face so that he could not see any longer. He made his way to the lee of the deck-house and looked out over the water to see how his vessel stood the strain. The riding light was still showing in the same

place; but a faint rattling told plainly that both anchors were now on the bottom, and that the mate, with the instinct of the true sailor, was giving them chain as fast as he could, with the hope of holding on. How it blew! The wind came in fierce gusts, rushing, tearing, over the lost ship.

The sails of the anchored schooner had been lowered just after dark. He had heard the creaking of the halliards. There would be no great sea where she lay, but enough to test the strength of the ground tackle she possessed. He wished vaguely that he had gone aboard. It was the place for him, upon the deck of his ship.

He watched the riding light for some minutes. It was jumping now with the rise and fall of the schooner. It was a desperate undertaking to row a small boat out to her; but the struggle appealed to him strongly. He should have gone aboard. He would go, and let himself down over the side of the wreck, with no concern save for the safety of the schooner and the crew aboard her. If he failed to make her, it was of no particular matter.

The small boat was made fast on the shore, and he reached her easily. The oars were in her, and she was all ready to row out, for the inside of the bank was partly sheltered, and there was no sea there yet. It would be a row across the wind with it a little astern, and he was a strong man. The wildness of the night seemed to stir something within him, and he grasped the oars eagerly for the struggle. He sent

the small boat's head out into the night and across that hurricane swept reef with a feeling of something akin to exhilaration. A blast of wind flung a sea over her, and the salt sea flew in his face, taking his breath for the instant; but he spat out the brine and drove the boat ahead.

The riding light appeared to get nearer. He was making good headway, although the water was flying over the boat and tossing her about like a cork. All around and about him the sea was white with a phosphorescent light from the breaking seas; but it failed to outline the hull of his vessel. He headed for the riding light, and he must make it, or —

He turned his head now and again to keep the course. The light did not draw closer very fast, and he knew he was rowing furiously. Then he noticed that it drew more and more to leeward. He was rowing with the wind now well aft. He knew what it meant: that his vessel was dragging her anchors and that there was little or no hope that he would board her. She might strike, or she might make the open sea. The mate was an able seaman and would get some canvas on her if he could to try to fight her off. Out on the wild, storm-swept ocean there might be safety. To leeward lay certain death.

He rowed now with increased vigour. He would endeavour to get close enough to hail her at least, even though he could not board her. Over the tops of the breaking seas the small boat fairly flew. She was gaining upon the receding light. The Captain turned

his head and saw he was almost alongside. He made out the voices of the men calling to each other as they close reefed the mainsail. He could hear the mate's orders, howled into a shriek, sounding faintly but unintelligible above the roar of the wind and sea. He now made out the hull of the vessel. He was close aboard. Then the riding light went out.

He knew he had seen the ending; for they had put the forestaysail on her and were driving her out to sea. As for himself, he was a lost man. He was so close to her now that he stood up and hailed.

"Keep her east southeast!" he roared out.

A questioning hail came through the night, a wild, terrified cry.

"Keep her east southeast! Good-bye!" he answered.

"Ay, ay, sir! Good-bye, sir!" came the voice of the mate booming hoarsely above the gale.

The *Buccaneer* fought her way out that night. She lost her foresail and half her other canvas before the finish; but she went to sea safely.

Three days later she came in and anchored near the wreck of the steamer. The mate and two men went ashore and searched the reef for signs of their Captain. The boat was gone, and so was he. This told the story. Two hours later they were tearing up the rusted hulk of the *Stella Polare*, and they carried tons of her to Key West in the little schooner, with the mate in command.

## XVI

### The Barrators

MR. BOOKER, of the firm of Booker, Benson & Co., closed the door of the inner office.

"Now, Captain Johns, let's have an understanding at once," said he in a low tone, "let's make no mistake about this thing. You know we represent the best there is in the shipping business. You know I've stood by you. You know how long you'd have been inspector of hulls if I hadn't fixed it for you with the commissioner. Now, we want James's certificate returned. He's been master of the *Enos* for years, and we can't afford to lose him ——"

"But he abandoned his ship in mid-ocean with passengers aboard," snapped Captain Johns. "How can we give him a certificate after that, hey? How'll I get around the fact —— What? I know what I owe you. I know I'm inspector, but I don't owe you any such rascality as that — no, sir. I'll lose my place if I do give it to him — you know that — and if I don't you threaten me ——"

"I threaten no man," interrupted Mr. Booker solemnly. "I simply put it to you as a business proposition. Captain James is our man. We want him. Now will you give him back his certificate or not?"



The inspector thought a minute. He was a big man, big, strong, capable of filling the office of inspector of hulls perfectly. He had been to sea for more than twenty years and was a first-class navigator, a first-class seaman. He knew the duties of inspector, and he knew the law. Upon him rested the responsibility of issuing masters' and mates' certificates, and he had generally conducted the examinations without fear or favour. He prided himself upon this point, for it was generally understood that a Board of Trade license was good. It meant something. But he knew Mr. Booker and he knew his man, Captain James, who had abandoned his vessel in mid-ocean.

"As far as the taking his license away from him is concerned," said he, looking straight at the head of the firm, "I had no more to do with it than others. We did the only thing we could do under the evidence." He seated himself in a chair and crossed a leg, rubbing his knee as though to gain time for the struggle he knew would take place. Mr. Booker was a leading shipper and also a politician of note. It was he who had swung the party; he who had practically made the inspectors. It would not do to act hastily. Booker was an able and deadly foe to any one who blocked his trade. He was unscrupulous when it came to acting against an enemy of the firm.

"I don't want to tie your vessel up," he went on, "and if I can do anything in reason I'll do it. Why not let the mate come up? There's nothing that can't

be argued away about him. He had to obey orders. I'll give him a ticket all right."

A strange light shone in Mr. Booker's eyes. He saw his man was weakening. It was what he wanted, this mate's ticket, but to state it openly would have meant ruin to his scheme. He held out strongly for his captain, but not strong enough to carry his point. If the inspector chose to promote his mate, it was not Mr. Booker's fault. That would lie entirely and healthily with others. After a futile struggle lasting half an hour he gave in.

"Very well, then. If you'll give Mr. McDuff a master's license and let him take the *Enos* out, it'll have to go. I don't stand for him, you know, and I want that distinctly understood. But I'll compromise on that — and not a little bit less. You know what she's carrying?"

The inspector did not. It was not his business to keep track of all cargoes before they were shipped. He felt irritated. His victory had at first seemed a good thing, a fine thing to get out of the hole yawning before him. Now there seemed to be some complications.

"It's dynamite," went on Mr. Booker indulgently. "Dynamite for the Canal, and while it's all right, you want a man who's mighty careful to carry it through the tropics along with the mercury exploders. Climate affects mercury, and it don't need much to send the whole kit to kingdom come. But let it go. I'll pay a premium the underwriters can't refuse. We'll

have to stand a heavy insurance with a man like McDuff — but of course, if you say so, let it go at that. James might go as mate. You won't take away his living, will you? You'll let him go as mate — on his old ticket? You know we've got to have men aboard a ship. A vessel won't run herself."

He arose to show the inspector that further conversation meant a loss of valuable time to the head of the firm. Captain Johns knew it and put on his hat. He had certain misgivings about granting McDuff a certificate, but he had passed his word. To break it would mean almost loss of position to himself, for Mr. Booker would do what he could to make him trouble, and he knew that trouble with Booker was trouble indeed. The inspector before him had cause to know this. There was no necessity for history repeating itself.

"I'll send McDuff down to you — good morning," said Mr. Booker, bowing him out.

Captain James and Mr. McDuff were staying at St. Lucia. It had been convenient for them both to keep well away from the curious gaze of the government officials after the supposed loss of the *Enos*, and St. Lucia was a beautiful, far-removed spot. Upon the crumbling ramparts of the fort near the entrance Mr. McDuff sat cogitating a few days after Mr. Booker had made his little deal with the inspector, and when a small black lad handed him an envelope bearing the firm's name in the corner the taciturn mate trembled. It was so beautiful, so far removed from modern

business, so restful at St. Lucia. The trade-wind blew steadily across the point and the Caribbean sparkled in the sunshine. The harbour, devoid of shipping save when the week-end steamer from the States came to load bananas, lay like a deep azure pool unruffled by the lively breeze outside. It made a picture of quiet repose, and even the old dismantled guns used hundreds of years before to repel the buccaneers before Morgan's day seemed to have sunk into attitudes of profound peace. Then this letter from the world of business and strife. McDuff hesitated about opening it. It was probably a scouring, scathing, blistering sheet, edited in the cutting language of the head of the firm. "Ah, what's the use?" sighed McDuff. He held the missive in his hand and was about to fling it over the rock and watch it go fluttering to the sea beneath. Then curiosity came to his aid.

"Might as well open it; if there's any hot stuff in it, I don't have to read it," he muttered. "Here, boy — here's a tuppence — git out."

He tore the paper, pulled the letter out and read it carefully, and as he did so his fingers clinched and his back straightened. He was wanted to go as skipper of the old ship. Would he? Well, he would do almost anything except eat bananas. He walked swiftly to the town and stopped only long enough to drink three high-balls of rum and cola. Ah, the sparkling cola! He must have that. Then he took the train for Kingston.

"The *Enos* is lying at the dock at Port Antonio,"

said Mr. Booker, after he had greeted his man coldly and formally. "You will proceed there and take command. Go down at once and see Johns. He'll give you your examination at once. Get your ticket and go. Then wait for further orders. James will be mate."

McDuff grinned.

"Ah, weel, I ken he'll be a noddy wan — ah, man, man, but I'll fair dress him down into shape," he said, shifting his watery gaze over the room.

"You can dress him all you want," said Mr. Booker. "If I were you, however, I would not tempt Providence too far. James will not stand too much foolishness. He can lick you."

"Ah, na fear, me laddie, na fear — do I fergit th' times he gie me? Na, na. Wait till I trim him — my mate — at last, at last," said McDuff with unction.

"Well, we'll let that go," said Booker; "you're carrying dynamite and it won't do to get too frivolous. Do you know anything about carrying dynamite?"

"Na, an' I'm that old to learn," said McDuff, eying the owner quizzically. All his Scotch canniness was alert.

"Oh, it's all right," said Booker; "only you don't want to make rough-house aboard your ship the first time you take her out as master. You're chartered for Colon again, carrying supplies for the Canal."

"Ah, weel," said the mate.

"I reckon that's about all, Captain McDuff. Do

your duty like a man. If you do we'll forget some of your past — understand?"

"I ken it, I'll do it," said the man, dropping his eyes to the floor. His past was not a thing to speak lightly upon.

"Drink as much cola and good rum as you think you need. It doesn't hurt a man used to it, like yourself."

McDuff gave the owner a long searching look. The idea tickled him. He threw back his head and laughed, showing his yellow fangs.

"Good day, Captain McDuff," said Booker, bowing him out.

The new master of the little cargo carrier *Enos* had hardly arrived aboard his vessel when James came slinking into the office. He had been laying up at Montego Bay, well up the hills, where the natives took care of him for sixpence a day. Booker appeared to have expected the visit. He closed the door of the inner office as the former skipper of the ship entered and they were alone.

"You know why I sent for you?" began Booker.

"I'm a good guesser," snarled the captain, his bloodshot eyes roving furtively about. "Make it short, don't cut in too deep. I'm here for orders."

"I haven't sent you up for life for desertion, have I?" asked the calm owner, eying him with a cold look.

"No, an' what's more you ain't going to," growled the captain.

"Lord, what a man!" sneered the owner. "You don't think I'm afraid to, do you?"

"There's mighty little you fear, Mr. Booker," said Captain James sourly, "but I understand you're not trading in morals — not yet. If you were, you might. If there's anything you've got to say, say it and let me go. I didn't come here for any lecture."

"How would you like to get your ticket back again — on some other vessel?" James eyed his former employer steadily. The effects of debauch made his swollen features seem grotesque in their red ugliness, but he was sober enough for business. He had dreaded the meeting. He knew his owner's moral tone, but he had not expected a reward where punishment was plainly indicated. He had given the ship a bad name.

"Let's have it fair and square — out with it," said the seaman.

"You know the ship is old — fit only to carry supplies," said Booker. "We're chartered to carry one hundred tons of blasting powder with exploders to Colon — enough to blow the whole Canal through. Can you see the point?"

"You don't want the stuff to get there — is that it?" asked James bluntly.

"If you can help us in the matter you shall be treated properly — your past forgotten," said Booker solemnly, eying him with a strangely insistent look.

"How much?" asked the practical navigator in a whisper.

"You'll get a thousand straight — my personal recommendation for any ship you wish. Perhaps in New York you'll find employment. We do a heavy business there ——"

"Anything in writing?" asked James, without moving.

"Nothing," said Booker carelessly.

"Is McDuff wise?"

"He is not — some men you can't trust when drunk — some you can."

"How'll I manage? How'll I make him understand? I can't blow the ship under him — kill all hands for a paltry thousand dollars," hissed James.

There was a long silence. Booker lit a cigar with a steady hand and puffed slowly. He was in no hurry. James gazed at him fixedly for a long time. He shifted uneasily in his chair.

"Suppose I refuse?" he said.

"You know the consequences," said Booker quite calmly.

"Try to hang me for deserting my ship, hey?" snarled the seaman. "Want me to do a dirty job for the insurance — won't even tell me how you want it done."

"It's up to you. You are a seaman — a captain. That's what I've been hiring you for. If I were a sailor I might give you directions. I'm not. Will you do it or not? Let's have it."

"Yes, I'll do it, you devil," snarled James. "I'll do it — somehow. Good day."



"Good day, Captain — Mr. James," said Booker without enthusiasm. He opened the door and the fat form of the disreputable seaman slouched out. A clerk met him at the door and handed him a note. It was permission to draw a hundred dollars for travelling expenses. James took it to the cashier and handed it in.

"Thought you were in jail," sneered the cashier as he took the paper.

"You are a liar," murmured James smoothly.

The official made no further comment. The glare from the old seaman's eyes did not justify it. He handed the money through the window with the air of one handing a bone to a starving dog. James stuffed it away in his clothes and pulling his hat over his eyes, went his way down the street to his favourite haunt when in town. No one appeared to notice him. He was not recognized.

"You can get me a bottle of rum," said he to the waiter.

"What kind, sare — three or six?"

"I'll drink somethin' about ten shillin's a bottle," said James. "Wake up!"

The waiter brought a bottle and drew the cork. The odour filled the air. It caused James to smack his lips and he drained four glasses in as many minutes. Then he sat back in his chair and seemed to study the negro's face.

"Do you know whether Mr. Jackson — firm of

Wells & Jackson, underwriters — is in town?" he asked.

"Yo' mean de insurance company, sare — yes, sare, he's here. Seen to-day on de street," answered the waiter. "He took a drink with Mr. Booker befo' closing time."

"Thank you, you can wrap up that bottle — I'll go along now," said the sailor.

It was plain to him that there had been a special deal, that Booker was carrying an extra heavy risk on his cargo. What if he should tackle Mr. Jackson? Jackson might listen to him, might even believe there was something in his warning, but he was a pariah and Mr. Booker was a gentleman. Then he had nothing whatever to offer as proof. His word against that of the owner? No, that wouldn't do at all.

He thought the matter over and finished off the bottle of rum while doing so. The more he drank the more he became convinced that the only thing to do was to follow Mr. Booker's wishes. The only thing was how would he do the job. How was it possible to sink a ship, blow her up, without killing all hands? He would not kill any one. No, he would not stoop to that. He must have time to think over the matter. It would require some nice adjustment to carry off the affair properly and not land in prison for life. He wondered whether McDuff knew anything of the deal. It was not likely; Mr. Booker had never made a confidant of the Scotchman, though the fellow had a close head and never talked, drunk or sober. James slept

over it and took the train for Port Antonio, arriving there in the afternoon. He at once made his way to the docks and boarded the *Enos* without being quizzed, though several persons seemed to show surprise at his presence. The story of his deserting his ship was now public property.

"I'm rare glad to see ye," said McDuff. "I'd na take ye for th' sneak they say ye are, Mr. — Mister James. I've been told ye wanted a place as mate wid the ould hooker. How is it?"

"Yes, I'll go as mate for you, Scotty," said James, thinking of the peculiar accent his former mate laid upon the word Mister. It was just as well to let the fellow know at once how much respect he felt for him. Then there would be no trouble in the future. He had served under him for several years, and it would swell his head, of course, to have command.

"I'm thinkin' — Mister — Meester James, that'll be about time ye took a reef in your tongue-lashin's. When ye have th' honour to speak to me, ye canna call me out of me name — that's Captain McDuff, sir — don't forget the SIR."

"No, Mack, I won't forgit it, an' don't you forgit who's talkin' to you either. If you do we'll have trouble — and Mr. Booker don't want any more of it in his ships — see? Let's have a drink, for the sake of old times?"

McDuff appeared to think a moment. It would hardly do to dress his mate now while at the dock.

James would not stand it. He would drink — and wait.

“They handle that stuff mighty careless like,” suggested James, gazing out of the stateroom door at the men loading cargo. “Seems to me if that’s dynamite there’s apt to be trouble — but then you only have it once,” he added reflectively.

“That’s the cargo, but not all dynamite. I dinna ken how much — but we pull out before dark. See to the gear aft — Meester James — an’ remember the trouble I had with that old stern line last voyage. Ye wouldna gie me a new wan.”

“Where do we go?” asked James.

“To New Orleans — git the cargo there, the rest of it. D’ye think, Meester James, that the British will furnish the powder? ’Tis good Yankee stuff we’ll take wi’ us, good New Orleans powder. Also we’ll take a bit o’ men, I’m thinkin’, some o’ that Dago gang for blasters. They make fine blasters, do Dagoes; an’ if ye lift a few o’ them to heaven, it makes little difference — there’s plenty more. But they are an ugly lot to handle, all armed with pistols or knives, ready to shoot or stab any one.”

“It’s the Dago nature to go heeled,” said James, drinking his rum and pondering over his scheme. The run to New Orleans offered nothing new in the way of developing his plans. He arose, went aft and made ready to get to sea. He was in an ugly mood, but all who knew him addressed him as “Captain,”

and the "Mister" was forgotten in the usual turmoil of getting the *Enos* under weigh.

A few days later in New Orleans the dynamite was aboard and the gangs of labourers who were to mine came down to the dock. James had studied many ways of getting the ship into trouble, but each one seemed too dangerous. It would not do to kill the crew. He would not do that, but to fire the cargo without almost certain death to all aboard appeared impossible. Then a thing occurred which seemed to be like the hand of Fate helping him on his way.

"'Tis a light cargo — an' she'll sit high, roll like a log," quoth McDuff the day after the powder had been safely stowed. "We've cleared and the insurance agent has had his claim settled. We're all ready for sea — Meester James — and we'll gie along; but I must ha' a wee bit o' drink first. Will ye coom along up the town, or will ye bide here till I come back?"

It still gave him pleasure to address his former captain in a patronizing manner with an emphasis upon "Meester."

James looked at him sourly and declined.

"Go on, Scotty," said he; "I'll stay by the ship. No drink for me until we get clear of this foul river. The stinks would spoil the taste of any kind of poison you'd put aboard ye."

"Weel, have a bit of a care, an' don't let them Dagoes get scuffling on the lower deck. There's a bit o' powder up there in them boxes," and McDuff went his way up the levee.

Sengali, the foreman of the gang, stood upon the string-piece of the wharf and glowered at the small ship. He was not a sailor, but he knew she would be a dirty and lively vessel in a blow. He had brought his wife with him, and together they surveyed the scene.

"We will go aboard and look—see," said he to his stout spouse, and they forthwith stepped upon the ship's deck. As nearly everybody had gone ashore as soon as McDuff's back had been seen upon the levee, they met no one and wandered over the *Enos* at will. Finally Sengali sat upon the boxes of powder and, lighting his pipe, began to smoke placidly. He was aware of the contents of the cases, but being an old hand at the handling of dynamite, he had developed that serenity and carelessness which is one of their distinguishing qualities. He feared not either fire or shock.

Mrs. Sengali wandered over the apparently deserted ship and finally found her way into McDuff's room in the rear of the pilot-house. Here she made herself comfortable.

It happened that Cellini, a young and amorous Dago, saw her. He had been drinking heavily, and as the coast appeared clear he made his way to the forward part of the ship, hoping to entertain the stout and rosy Mrs. Sengali in a manner common to drunken Dagoes. He saw no one forward and made his way to the captain's room. Then he quickly entered and swiftly closed the door.

Sengali, smoking and pondering upon the future to be had in the world at Panama, was aroused from pleasant dreams by the shrill screams of his wife. He sprang up the companionway and rushed for the vicinity of the noise. The cries seemed to come from the captain's room, and he hesitated. It was a terrible crime to assault a captain upon his own ship. But his wife. She was in terrible danger, her shrieks were now being half muffled, showing that the person who had caused them was stifling them as best he could. The Dago waited no longer; he crashed against the door.

It gave way with the impact and Sengali landed in the room. Cellini was holding his wife, but let her go instantly, and drawing a revolver, fired at Sengali. The latter raced for the companionway, hoping to gain his bundle, in which reposed his trusty knife. The bundle was lying where he had sat smoking upon the cases of dynamite, and he tore it apart, seized his weapon and turned to mete out a just revenge upon his assailant.

"I keel you now," he roared and rushed at Cellini, who had come floundering down the stairs after him, but who, being drunk, had tripped and had thus lost valuable time.

Cellini, lying upon one elbow, took deliberate aim at the enraged husband. A fireman, who had seen the fracas, fled up the levee shouting for the police, and James, who had been drowsing in his room, rolled out of his bunk and went to the scene of the trouble,

intending to quell it, as a mate should. Cellini's first shot from his position where he had fallen tore through Sengali's uplifted hand. He gave a yell and drew it down, staggering and flinging the blood about. Then he rushed again at his prostrate enemy, his knife upraised, ready for the finishing stroke.

James gained the vicinity just as Cellini raised his weapon for the last shot. Drunk and furious at the interruption of Sengali, he appeared not to care for the retribution the husband was going to wreak upon him. He aimed carefully at the foreman's head and pulled the trigger. Just then James kicked the pistol aside and it exploded.

A man on the levee at some distance vouched for this much of the final act. He saw James kick the weapon, saw it explode. The next instant the forward part of the *Enos* disappeared in a mass of flame.

Men came running from all directions at the sound of the detonating thunder. The rolling roar reverberated along the river-front for miles. People at a distance saw a huge waterspout rise from where the ship had been a moment before. Splinters, ironwork, rigging, spars and a piece of her smoke-pipe rose to an appalling height. Then the scene settled itself under a pall of dust and smoke.

The levee was destroyed for a distance of fifty fathoms. The dock had melted into the surrounding air. Trees, fences, and houses, everything at a distance of a quarter of a mile was razed flat. Men were knocked stunned and senseless who had been within



this radius and the whole place seemed to have been shaved as with a mighty razor. Only a bit of the ship's stern, a tiny piece of her turtle-back, floated awash to show that there had ever been anything like a ship in the vicinity. The *Enos*, loaded with dynamite, had blown up with all on board and had almost totally disappeared.

A few hours later McDuff came lurching down to his ship. He was comfortably drunk and was in high good humour.

"I'll trim Meester James — ah, yes, I'll trim him guid an' fine before we gie th' dock at Colon. 'Tis a fine thing to be th' boss — What, am I drunk, or has the knave run away wid me ship? He has run away — yes, yes, he has run away. Ah, weel, what'll I do — The rascal has stolen me ship," said McDuff, looking about him and seeing nothing to indicate the whereabouts of the *Enos*. "Ah, weel, it was not my ship — but I will have the police after him. I will have him in th' calaboose. I'm fair drunk, I'm fair drunk — but na sa drunk I canna see a ship."

Mr. Booker read the cable despatch and handed it to his partner.

"That man James was certainly a genius," said he. "I'm half sorry for him. I guess he must have been too zealous — 'twasn't like him, yet he must have been too anxious to please me."

"He'll turn up in time," quoth his partner, the amiable Mr. Benson. "The fact that he was aboard of her does seem a bit out of the ordinary, but there's

probably some mistake about it. It'll straighten itself out later. He'll be here to see you, or I'm clean disappointed in him."

"I reckon we might as well attend to the underwriters without waiting for any complications," suggested Mr. Booker.

"Oh, yes, get the insurance. We've had a bit of luck — that's all."

**THE END.**

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*With an appreciative Foreword by Basil King*

*Cloth decorative, 12mo, illustrated, \$1.90*

ISABEL ANDERSON, who heretofore has confined her literary talents to writing of presidents and diplomats and fascinating foreign lands, contributes to our list her first novel, POLLY THE PAGAN, a story of European life and "high society." The story is unfolded in the lively letters of a gay and vivacious American girl traveling in Europe, and tells of the men whom she meets in Paris, in London or Rome, her flirtations (and they are many and varied!) and exciting experiences. Among the letters written to her are slangy ones from an American college boy and some in broken English from a fascinated Russian Prince (or was he disillusioned, when after dining at a smart Parisian café with the adorable Polly he was trapped by secret police?); but the chief interest, so far as Polly's *affaires d'amour* are concerned, centers around the letters from a young American, in the diplomatic service in Rome, who is in a position to give intimate descriptions of smart life and Italian society.

The character drawing is clever, and the suspense as to whom the fascinating Polly will marry, if indeed the mysterious young lady will marry anybody, is admirably sustained.

# THE RED CAVALIER

Or, The Twin Turrets Mystery



By G. E. Locke



*Cloth decorative, 12mo, illustrated, \$1.90*

HERE is a mystery story that is different! The subtlety and strangeness of India—poison and daggers, the impassive faces and fierce hearts of Prince Bardai and his priestly adviser; a typical English week-end house party in the mystery-haunted castle, Twin Turrets, in Yorkshire; a vivid and contrasting background.

And the plot! Who is the mysterious Red Cavalier? Is he the ghost of the ancestral portrait, that hangs in Sir Robert Grainger's strange library? Is he flesh and blood, and responsible for the marauding thefts in the neighborhood? Is he responsible for Prince Kassim's murder? Or is it only coincidence that one of the guests at the masked ball happened to wear the costume of the Red Cavalier?

Miss Locke has been able to weave a weird and absorbing tale of modern detective romance, the strangeness of India in modern England.

There is Lady Berenice Coningsby, a bit *déclassé*; Ethelyn Roydon, more so; Princess Lona Bardai, "Little Lotus-Blossom," sweet and pathetic; Mrs. Dalrymple, the woman of mystery; Miss Vandelia Egerton, the spinster owner of Twin Turrets. There is dashing Max Egerton and the impeccable Lord Borrowdean; Captain Grenville Coningsby; Prince Kassim Bardai, with the impenetrable eyes, and Chand Talsdad, his venerable adviser. Which of them is the Red Cavalier?